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# MAUDE

OR

## THE ANGLICAN SISTER OF MERCY.

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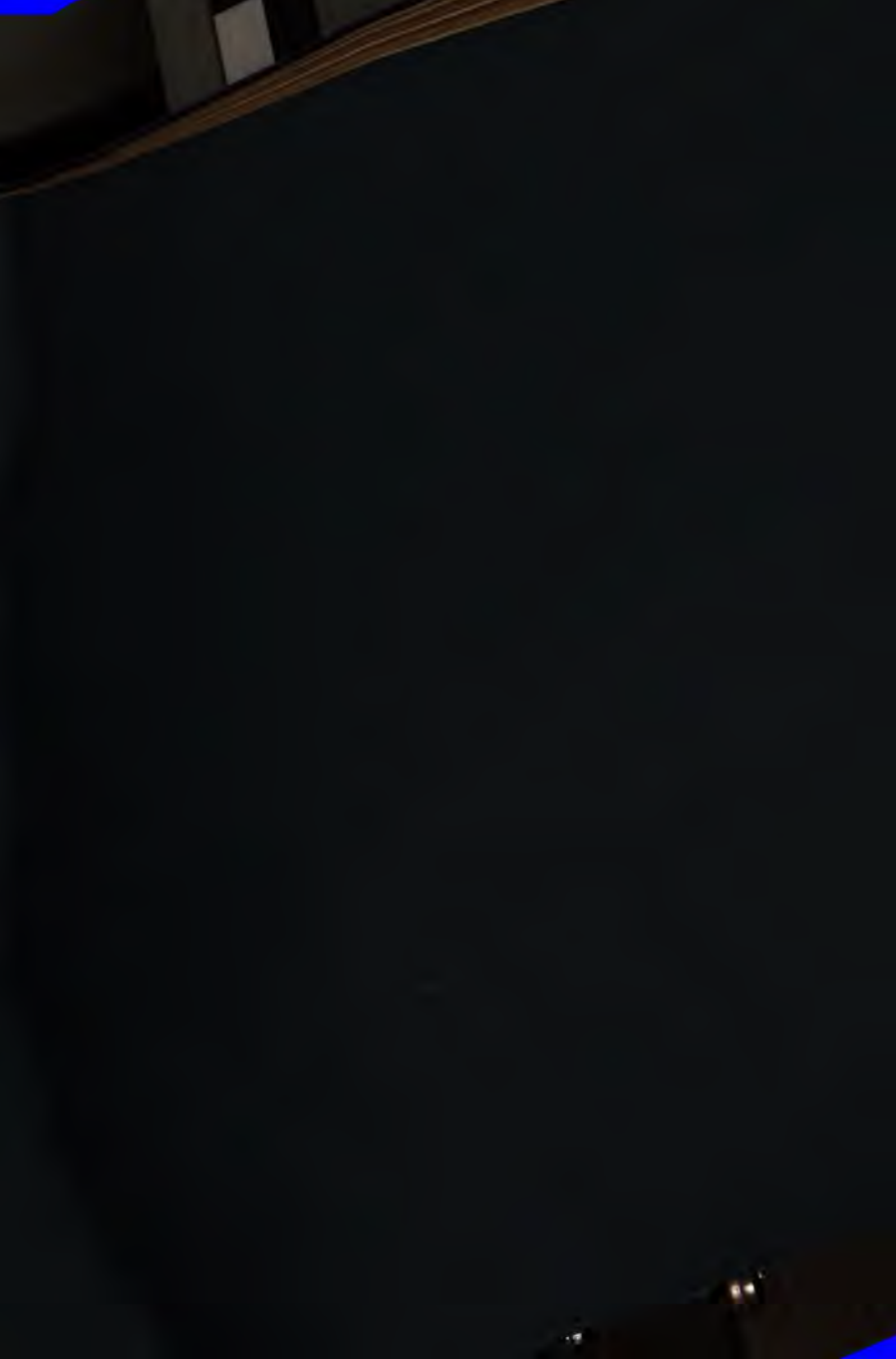

# MAUDE;

OR

## THE ANGLICAN SISTER OF MERCY.

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OR,

# THE ANGLICAN SISTER OF MERCY.

EDITED BY

MISS WHATELY,

AUTHORESS OF "ENGLISH SYNONYMES," "LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP WHATELY," ETC., ETC.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:

HARRISON, 59, PALL MALL,

BOOKSELLER TO HER MAJESTY AND H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

1872.

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# PREFACE.

THE establishment of numerous SISTERHOODS in this country, within the last few years, makes it very important that all the facts which may throw light upon their character and working should be widely known and carefully studied.

These institutions having received the approval of some of the Bishops and Clergy of the English Church, many persons naturally suppose that no evil results are likely to follow from their establishment, and that the spirit in which they are conducted is not inconsistent with the principles of the Reformation.

When, therefore, circumstances enabled me to become very intimately acquainted with the true condition and secret working of these institutions, I felt that the public ought to be in possession of such knowledge; the more so as it was evident that there was a very general and serious misapprehension as to the real state of the case.

The narrative which I now bring forward, and to the entire authenticity and absolute truth of which I pledge myself, is not of recent date. Nearly twenty years have elapsed since the events it relates took

place. And had it been a mere isolated case—had the effort to restore to the Church of England the old Conventual System of Rome been a mere ephemeral scheme, which "sprang up and died away in a night," then, the facts recorded in these pages, however interesting in themselves, would only be of importance to readers who love to study the various phases of human nature, and it might have been doubtful how far it were worth while to republish, in this point of view, a narrative of events so long past.

But the reverse of all this is the case. The history I bring forward relates to a movement which is going on at this present moment. It unveils the secret tactics of those who have been and are deliberately and perseveringly labouring to restore the practices of the Church of Rome in our country. It reveals the steps by which the Sisterhoods, supposed by many to be mere associations for charitable purposes, have become identified in principle and action with the Romish Conventual System.

The subject of this narrative, whom I have called "Maude Deerswood," is a personal and intimate friend of my own. She was the daughter of a gentleman of old family and good position, was introduced at an early age, and for the next few years was taken much into society, both in England and on the Continent. Some little time before the date at which this history commences, she had begun to experience that wakening to serious thought, and that sense of the

unsatisfactoriness of the pleasures of the world, which is so often felt by intelligent and earnest-minded young people entering on life.

The course of thought and action to which these reflections led her, and which occupied the next two years of her life, are recorded in these pages. She was led subsequently to make for her mother very full and minute memoranda of the events of these two years still fresh in her memory,—and these accounts she placed in my hands.

So important did my father, Archbishop Whately, consider these facts, that he not only urged their publication, but offered to edit this narrative himself, which was only prevented by his death.

I have, for obvious reasons, thought it right to alter the names of the persons and places referred to in the following pages; but, after all, it matters comparatively little who are the *individuals* responsible for the introduction and spread of these Sisterhoods; the really important question to the public is, whether the doctrines thus promulgated are, or are not, identical with the monastic system of the Church of Rome? If they are, the next question for consideration is, whether the English people will encourage and sanction the growth of institutions in this country which, even in a social point of view, are now regarded, even in Roman Catholic countries, as utterly fatal to their well-being?

E. JANE WHATELY.

*September*, 1869.

# MAUDE;

OR

# THE ANGLICAN SISTER OF MERCY.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE RESOLUTION.

THE Sunday morning service had just ended in the little country church of Wilsden, and the villagers were dispersing, many lingering near the churchyard gate to drop a curtsey or touch their hats, with glances of respectful sympathy, to Mrs. Rivers, who, with her younger sister, Maude Deerswood, walked slowly home through the fields. Both were in deep sorrow of heart, for only a few months had passed since Mr. Rivers' sudden death.

It had been a terrible calamity, casting sorrow and gloom over the whole neighbourhood. Month after month had passed away, but the shadow of that fatal summer morning hung over the young widow's heart, and darkened all the world to her. Maude was at home with her mother in a distant county when the accident happened, and had hastened to her sister in

very deep grief and sympathy. Happily there were little children at Wilsden to claim their mother's thoughts, and the presence of her baby boy seemed at times to lighten the sweet, sad face. Now as they reached the house, the merry little voices greeted them, but the exertion of the morning had been too much for Mrs. Rivers. Maude sent away the little ones to the nursery, and was glad, at the end of an hour, to leave her sister comparatively restored.

Her heart ached; she felt so incapable of consoling such grief; she knew that there were times when all human sympathy fails. She made her way to a favourite nook on a wooden bridge which crossed the little river running through the grounds, and, leaning on the rails, gave herself up to the thoughts which burdened her mind.

As it will be necessary to understand somewhat of her character, in order to trace the powerful influence of the Romanistic "religious life" principles, which were as yet unknown to her, we will give her thoughts at this time more in detail.

Mingling with her deep sympathy in her sister's sorrow, was an undefined grief for herself. Why was there so much misery in the world! Why were all bright and beautiful things to pass away so quickly! Why was nothing reliable—nothing that could be safely leant on for happiness! All that the world could give, all the treasures of love and happiness that the human heart could crave, seemed given but to be taken away in a moment, leaving the spirit to utter desolation.

What meant all this? Surely there must be some secret in this earth-woe which she had not fathomed.

Surely God must have some panacea for the terrible aching of the hearts He had made. Surely there must be some wonderful compensation for the misery of the souls He had created?

She thought of all her intense longing for calm, patience, peace of mind, belief in God's love to His creatures, and contrasted it with her reckless impatience of sorrow, her utter inability to banish from her mind the thought that such misery was not deserved! . . .

That drive of yesterday! She seemed yet to feel the tight grasp of her sister's hand as they passed a labourer playing with his children, the smiling wife standing at the cottage door. She seemed still to hear the sad, low voice, "If *he* were only here, and we like them." What an utter desolation was this! and Maude's thoughts wandered over hours too sacred in their grief to be more than touched upon; would that she could comfort and sustain her sister!

What was there on earth worth living for but to help to bear the burdens of others, to help to lighten the sorrow and misery around? Yes, a sister of mercy's life must be a most blessed one! And here her thoughts fell into a channel they had been accustomed to flow through for many weeks past.

She had heard of a Protestant Sisterhood at Westonbury, and was daily expecting to hear from a friend who had promised to write to the Superior, and make inquiries for her about it. Already an ideal future was presenting itself to her mind of what a sister of mercy's life might be. Could there be a holier vocation, than that of all day helping the poor and sorrowing?

And then, was it not the nearest following of the Lord's footsteps on earth—He who went about doing good, He who said it was more blessed to minister than to be ministered unto?

Yes, when she should be no longer necessary to her sister, she would go and devote her life to the poor and the suffering, in this Protestant Sisterhood. And her thoughts now were calm and restful as she gazed abstractedly down into the river.

At this time Maude Deerswood had no particular bias toward any sect or party in religion; brought up in the Church of England, she had from her infancy been educated in all the great principles of Christian morality. Of doctrine she had accepted all she had been taught without questioning, till within the last few years, when, at the time of her father's death, she had thought deeply on spiritual things. What she had seen of religion in France and Italy had made her value the purer forms of worship in her own church; but though intellectually and morally Protestant, she understood little of doctrinal subjects, and, spiritually, she often questioned if she really *believed* in Christ.

The Holy Scriptures seemed to her to open a world of faith so different from the present actual one of sight and sense. She was more of a Deist than a believer in Christ, yet she prayed often and earnestly to God to teach her and lead her into full belief in Christianity, if it were true. Practically, she always acted on Christian principle; her devotional instincts were strong, and formed as much a part of her character as her amiability and attractiveness.

And here it will be well to remember that, twenty years ago, religion was not so much a subject of common discussion as in the present day. Ritualism was not developed in the scenic decoration and mediæval millinery now common in so many churches, which make it a fashion of the day among the young. The doctrines and rites now so openly preached and practised were then only beginning to be cautiously and secretly introduced, hidden under various disguises, spoken of with various reservations as "Church principles," and practised with sundry modifications as "according to the Rubrics." It was only here and there that any startling change was made in the ordinary mode of conducting public worship, and this was principally confined to a few churches and chapels, mostly in London, where the young Anglican curate, fresh from Oxford, or the more formidable leaders of the "Tracts for the Times" movement, were gradually drawing their followers to Rome, whilst loudly declaring "that they taught nothing but the recognized principles of the Church of England."

But to return to our narrative. The post of the next day brought Maude her long-expected letter. She smiled as she opened it, and saw enclosed a note, signed "Ursula, Sister of Mercy," not, indeed, addressed to her, but to the friend who had made inquiries about the Protestant Sisterhood for her, and who now sent the answer. It was as follows:—

"My dear Madam,

"I must indeed beg you to accept many apologies for the long delay which has occurred in answering your letter. The Lady Superior much regrets being

unable to write to you herself, as she so gladly would. She bids me thank you for the interesting account you send of your friend, and tell you in answer to your inquiries what she ever proposes to those who, like her, are earnestly wishing to begin the life of a sister of mercy, namely, that she should come and make trial of it among us for a period of at least three months; this trial is requisite before any one can be admitted as a sister, and it enables them to judge of its privileges and duties, and to make a final decision concerning it. She begs you to give her very kind regards to your friend, and to assure her of a loving welcome for this time of probation. The only conditions she names are, a conformity to the outward rules of the sisterhood, and a strict obedience to all directions given concerning her work; she will readily perceive the necessity of these for the sake of order and regularity. It is impossible to give any just idea in writing of what life in a sisterhood is; it can only be known and estimated by partaking in it; but we cannot but feel that to a heart such as you describe, it would be a life of deep blessing and happiness. May she be indeed enabled to make the proof of it, and then choose it as her own, until she is called to that fulness of bliss, and nearness to her Master in our home above.

"Believe me, dear Madam,

"Yours with very true regard,

"URSULA, S. M."

Maude was delighted with this letter, and wrote forthwith to the Lady Superior, saying how much she wished she could avail herself of the kind invitation conveyed in Sister Ursula's letter, and how she

longed to be a sister of mercy; but that even if she could obtain her mother's consent, she could not leave her widowed sister for some time yet. This letter was also answered by Sister Ursula.

"My dear Madam,

"The Mother Superior much regrets being prevented by a severe attack of illness from answering your letter herself. She bids me thank you for it with her affectionate regards, and tell you she shall be most glad to hear from you again. It must, indeed, be a comfort to you to see some gleams breaking upon the darkness, some hope that, in His own good time, God will answer your prayers and your longings, though He still cause you to wait upon His will, though many difficulties and hindrances still are around you, and such, too, as perhaps must keep you back for a time. The chief one seems to be the want of your mother's consent to entering or making trial of this life. You could not come without this; you could not feel that any sacrifice or offering of yourself to Almighty God would be acceptable to Him without it; nor could the Lady Superior receive you before you had obtained it. Is your mother at all aware of your desire and hopes for the future? The happiness of a child is ever very dear to a parent's heart; and if she knew how bound up yours were in another and far different life to that in which you are placed, might she not be inclined to allow you to make trial of it? But, at any rate, it were better to wait long than to come with a doubtful blessing on what you were undertaking. And how great is the strength of prayer! And does not God Almighty love to grant to His own what He puts into their hearts to long

for with very deep longings, though He would prove them whether they love His will in it better than their own? It is, indeed, a life to long for; its happiness and its privileges only to be realized in the possession. Yet, you must not think it has not its trials and its stern realities in every-day life as well; only they are sweetened and made bright and light by the stream of living water which flows from His presence, more especially by the daily food which in His goodness He vouchsafes us; for we are blessed as few are in having Holy Communion every morning in the parish church of Westonbury. Our work time is about six hours daily; each has that apportioned her to do for which she is best suited. Some have different schools under their care; others visit and relieve the poor at our own houses; others have the charge of our orphans. We have time for private devotion besides our social services, in the morning and afternoon, and an hour for spiritual reading in the evening. There are now five sisters, and our mother, and several who are trying the life previous to admission as sisters. We have also time for rest and recreation in the middle of the day. I trust, my dear Madam, the time will come, and may it come soon, if so it please God, when you may be joined with ourselves among our happy little company. In the meantime, may you have patience, and steadfastness, and a deep love for His will even in denying you for a time, it may be, what seems so much according to it.

"Believe me yours,

"With very, very sincere regard,

"URSULA, S. M."

The next letter Maude wrote was to inform the

Mother Superior that she had put all her cherished hopes and wishes before her mother, but that Lady Deerswood would not hear of their being carried out either now or at any future time. Sister Ursula again answered for the Superior.

"My dear Madam,

"The Lady Superior has once more charged me with the care of answering your note. She sympathizes with you most deeply in the disappointment which it pleases God to lay upon you, but she bids me say to you, from her, that she is quite sure that you may look forward to one day entering upon a devoted life as a sister, though now you must wait for it. Then must you not look up to Him in trust and love, and cast yourself upon His will, to be done with as He likes, though it be that yet longer your service must consist in patient waiting and in prayer, and that, too, amid the sun and dust of the world's common path? Will you not look on the time yet before you as one to be passed in preparation for a life to which He will yet call you, and this the more earnestly that you may be ready to go forth in His strength when He shall speak the word? There are so many ways in which persons may be fitting themselves in the world for what is more strictly speaking the religious life, by living by rule, as far as they can, by daily works of mercy to the poor, by refraining from mixing in general society, by great plainness of dress; and then with regard to the inner life, by stated times of prayer, by keeping the canonical hours, making a course of religious reading; and by some of the first-mentioned of these acts you would prove to others the depth and reality of your feelings with

regard to the life which you wish to choose; and this might, by God's blessing, be a means of softening their prejudices. The Lady Superior bids me tell you, that should you have any thought of so ordering your future way of life, as leading and preparing to that of a sister of mercy, she will very gladly give you any such counsel as she may be able, if you will send her any definite questions or information on which you need advice.

"With every earnest wish that God may strengthen your heart,

"Believe me, dear Madam,

"Yours affectionately in Christ,

"URSULA, S. M."

Maude was only too glad to follow the advice given. She wrote very fully to the Mother Superior, asked what were the canonical hours, and expressed her determination, God helping her, to begin at once to prepare for her future life as a sister of mercy.

The Superior now wrote herself:—

"My dear daughter in Christ,

"I address you as I would one of my own children, for I believe your heart is with them in the love of our Lord, and you are most dear to me for His sake.

"I have been reading your letter, my dear child, with prayer to God that He would keep you steadfast amid the perils which surround you. They are very great, but His grace is greater; and in proportion as you feel your own weakness, He who has loved you, and called you to be especially His own, will strengthen you for the conflict.

"I am not surprised at the opposition you meet with; the surprise to me is where such a vocation is

*not* opposed. It is contrary to every argument of worldly wisdom, and prudence and excellence; it is, on the very face of it, reckless, and mad, and enthusiastic. It is counted very mad to rise up and forsake all, and follow Christ. It is said that one can perform domestic duties and the duties of society, which have a claim upon one, and love and serve our Lord in them; but there are some hearts to whom He has given higher, deeper yearnings, which the world knows not of, and which it cannot understand; some hearts who cannot live in luxury when our Lord lived in poverty, who cannot be idle when He went about doing good, who cannot but live for His poor when He told us that in ministering to them we minister to Him; some hearts who hate wealth and despise respectability, which is a very idol in our country, and which word does not bear any Christian interpretation. The love of home is also another idol, a very sweet and honorable one, but one which, alas! comes often between us and high duties to our church, the poor, and our Lord Himself. You are quite right in submitting to your mother's wishes; but do not cease to pray God to bring you, in the end, into the life you seek; and pray for the grace of steadfastness to the thoughts and longings He has put into your heart, and for final perseverance. I cannot speak too earnestly upon this point. Satan will never rest in attempting to move you and make you waver; he will try every artifice and temptation to bring you to fall short of the calling wherewith God has called you.

"It would be well for you to avoid society as much as possible, and to spend much time in diligent prayer and holy reading, to be careful only to work for the

poor, or to do ornamental work for churches, but nothing which is not to be referred to the glory of God; to dress with scrupulous plainness. Do not mind the world or even relations laughing at you. It will be a good discipline, and God will bless it to you even more than you think. In the end you can say that you only remain in the world in obedience to your mother, but that you cannot answer it to your conscience and to God not to lead a life in the world as near to our blessed Lord's example as you can. Never mind being thought mad; St. Paul was thought mad; but remember that the wisdom of this world is folly in the sight of God. Try and avoid all conversation on theological or religious subjects, and if it is begun with you, cut all arguments as short as you can. Try and say, every hour, 'Good Jesu, keep me near to Thee,' and say it three times for every time that you forget. I send you a little book to use at certain hours (the canonical hours), and I should like you to make as much use as you can of the psalms. I should like you to read Bishop Taylor's Life of Christ. Tell me at what hour you are in the habit of rising, and your usual way of passing your life with your sister. I wish I could see you, for I could be more useful to you afterwards. I would, if it please God, come some distance to meet you, if it could be so arranged; but perhaps you would not be allowed to travel by yourself. And now, may God bless you, my dear child; and may He to whom you have offered yourself draw you nearer and nearer to Himself, making you wholly His, and fitting you for His service.

"In Him, your affectionate mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

Soon after the receipt of this letter Maude wrote to say that in a few weeks she was going to London; that it would be a great help and comfort to see Mother Angelica; but she doubted if it would be right to meet her without Lady Deerswood's knowledge. The meeting did not take place, though the Superior had no scruples on the subject, as Maude plainly saw in the following letter:—

"My dearest daughter in Christ,

"I write one word to say that I could meet you gladly and willingly on the road if you could meet me, as I am satisfied my correspondence would be more useful to you after I had had some conversation with you.

"I do not think it would be at all wrong for you to see me without your mother's knowledge, unless she had absolutely forbidden you, and I do not think it needful to ask. I could meet you at Littleham, Chilcote, or I would come to London. It would be better for you not to come *here* without your mother's consent, as that would be a much greater act of freewill.

"I am writing in haste to save the post. God bless you, my child; may He guide, comfort, and stablish you. In Him,

"Your very affectionate mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

And this letter was quickly followed by another, so anxious did the Superior appear to be to see Maude:

"My dearest child,

"I write in much haste; if you can stay in London and meet me any where on Friday next, I can manage to see you. I could meet you at London, Littleham, Chilcote, or any other place, at any hour,

the two last would be the most convenient perhaps. Do you think you can manage to do this? and if so, tell me where and at what hour, and I will arrange my journey accordingly.

"I fear you said that you had to leave on Thursday next; but perhaps you could arrange this delay. I will gladly see you, if possible; if it may be that God may thus send you some comfort and strength in your thorny path of this world.

"May God bless you, my child, and fill you with His own presence. In Him,

"Your very affectionate mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

The opportunity thus presented of seeing the Mother Superior had been a great temptation to Maude; but she could not but see in this case the plain duty she owed to her own mother, and gave up all idea of so clandestine a meeting. Sister Ursula wrote to tell her of the Superior's disappointment at not seeing her:—

"My dear Maude,

"May I call you so, for it seems so cold to address you in mere polite phrase when our hearts feel so much in common upon that which lies deepest in them, and which overcomes the conventionalities of common life? Our Mother bids me write to you; she was much grieved that you decided upon not meeting her; it did seem that this might have been a means of strengthening and comforting you in a path of many difficulties and temptations. Oh, it is not argument or reasoning which can either do away or prove the truth of the heart's desire and yearning to give all it has—all its affections and powers to the

single service of its Maker and Lord. No words of man can nullify the words of God, when He Himself so lovingly invites us to leave father or mother, or brethren, or sisters, or houses, or lands for His name's sake; nay, does He not also almost sternly add warning of the hundred-fold more—be not sufficient to cause us to listen when His voice draws us,—when He says, 'He that hateth not all these is not worthy of me.' We need not *seek* to *prove* to ourselves the reality of what He is teaching our souls; does He not say that He Himself will prove and try us? Be sure He does not give such a blessed privilege—an angel's portion, to minister to Himself—to be drawn so near to Him, without searching and trying our hearts, to cleanse them of all mixture of self, that the offering may be pure and holy, and what He will accept, only let us beware that we lose not the place near Him, even on earth, to which He would bring us. What a blessing does He not give on following what is but a glimmer of His will! What may we not lose by resisting that strong inward teaching which the soul cannot mistake, for when He speaks to it we must listen. There is, there is indeed, a happiness in this life which those outside know nothing of: it is the heart satisfied—at rest in Him, having found what it sought for in vain, even in the most earnest life in the world, for even that will not fill and content the soul when it has yearnings for something more devoted, more out of itself. It must be the nearest approach to the life of the blessed in heaven; for the happiness there will be to be absorbed in Him—filled with Him. And is it not the same in its measure here, to live in Him, doing the least thing for Him: for I suppose perfec-

tion would be to do nothing for self alone; and this is what we may aspire to in a religious life; and then, oh, blessed life! that He should live in us daily, coming to us to take up His abode, feeding us morning by morning with Himself, as He Himself so graciously and tenderly has told us: 'Ye in me and I in you; as I live ye shall live also.' May our Lord, indeed, preserve and strengthen what He has begun in you, and enable you to hold fast by Him, nor leave His hand for your own guidance. In Him,

"Your very affectionate friend and sister,

"URSULA, S. M.

"Our dearest Mother sends you her love and blessing."

Many months had now passed since Maude began carrying out the plan proposed by the Superior of Westonbury; her ideal of the life of a sister of mercy had deepened into a fixed conviction that it was the only possible life for her, and how to attain it became an absorbing thought. She had left Mrs. Rivers for a short time, and was with her mother, and though outwardly conforming to her wishes, Lady Deerswood felt painfully that her daughter was gradually withdrawing from her both confidence and affection. Hearing that the Westonbury Sisterhood was suspected of Romanizing tendencies, she permitted her to write and ask some direct questions as to the truth of such reports; and Maude took the opportunity of again expressing to Mother Angelica her conviction that she must be called by God to a sister's life. The Superior, after some lapse of time, answered her as follows:—

"My dearest Child,

"I ought to have written to you before, if I could be of any use to you; but I scarcely know how to write to you.

"I fear placing before you a rule of life which may seem too hard to you of attainment, yet I can write in no other way. I can only tell you what is good and right for you to do; but you must seek strength from God to follow it. I think, dearest child, with the voice which you speak of within you, you ought to lead a very retired life; you ought positively to resist all worldly society. I do not think you ought positively to leave home without your mother's consent; but I *do* think that you ought to resist going into society, and to say that the time was short—life uncertain; that not even your mother could answer to God for your soul at the last dread day, and that you had determined, God being your helper, to live a religious life devoted to prayer, meditation, and good works; that you could no longer mix in the world; and that you must henceforth give up everything like the dress society, and occupations of the world.

"This is a hard struggle I set before you; but, my dear child, I dare not say aught else. I could speak soothing words to you, which might reconcile you for a time to the lying vanities of the world. I might tell you of many reasons which would sound wise and good, and right; but 'there is a way that seemeth good unto a man, but the end of that way is death.' God would not be speaking so to your conscience if He did not will that His voice should be heard and should be attended to far beyond the voice of man.

"In answer to some of your questions, dear child, I can only say that I grieve very deeply over those late secessions to Rome. May God overrule all for good, and may He pardon those who desert the church of our country in her hour of utmost need and darkest peril; and for ourselves let us watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

"What opportunities have you of receiving holy communion where you now are?

"May God bless and strengthen you, dear child; continue to read the Holy Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelations, on your knees before God, and may He enlighten you, and strengthen you, to see and do His blessed will.

"In Him, your affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

We have given, at the risk of appearing tedious, a full detail of the process of thought by which Maude was led to embrace what is called "the religious life," believing that her experience depicts that of many young people at the present day, and may therefore be usefully applied.

The letters of the Superior and Sister Ursula are given *verbatim* here and throughout the narrative. It is worth remarking that the strength and plausibility of these letters lies in their being *so nearly* true. All that is said of single-hearted devotedness to God and close following of Christ, is in itself right; the fallacy which Maude very naturally overlooked consists in ignoring that this devotedness to God can only be acceptable to Him when it leads us to follow *His* leading, not our own, to do "what our hand findeth to do," not what our will chooseth. He has given us

our home ties and duties; and to set these aside for work planned and devised by ourselves is *not* in reality following Him, but following *ourselves*. Our Lord's words that a man must "hate father and mother," &c., were manifestly intended for those who were called on to choose between their faith and their families. In such a case there could be no hesitation; but when the choice lies between conflicting duties, to leave those directly given us by God, even for what we consider His service, is surely like the conduct of the Jews of old, who called what was due to their parents "Corban."

But we must proceed to some months later, when Maude accompanied Mrs. Rivers and the children to meet Lady Deerswood on the continent.

## CHAPTER II.

### RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FRANCE.

SITTING on the deck of the Calais steamer, Maude was occupied in meditating on the new scenes she was entering upon. Must she again be involved in the busy routine of every-day life? Must she be swept on with the tide of social interests, occupations, and pursuits rushing past her? She had profited so well by Mother Angelica's teaching, that her original ideal of a sister of mercy's life, devoted to helping to bear the burdens and soothe the sorrows of others, was giving place to the cultivation of an ascetic mode of life, in which the hating of father, mother, brothers, and sisters, seemed to be a necessary preliminary to the "angelic life" she was fitting herself to enter upon; but to her lively sympathies and affectionate nature the work was hard, and the progress comparatively slow; and now, as they neared the French coast, she was nerving herself for a more decided separation of occupation and interest from her family.

They had not been long in Paris when she was introduced, in her mother's drawing-room, to Mrs. Willoughby, a lady who had for years lived abroad, and whose benevolent disposition led her to take great interest in all charitable institutions. In the

course of conversation she said she was on her way to St. Anne's Hospital, to carry some fruit to the convalescents. Would Miss Deerswood like to go with her? Maude was only too ready to accept the invitation; and, as Mrs. Willoughby had omitted to say that the hospital was in connection with one of the largest convents in the city, her mother made no objection to the plan.

The day was an eventful one to her. She made acquaintance with several nuns and priests, received pressing invitations to visit the community, and in the course of the next few weeks had the *entrée* of three different convents, and held frequent conversations with two priests, who had both sought to convince her that no real vocation for the life of a sister of mercy could be exercised outside the pale of the Roman Catholic Church. But it will be well to give one or two scenes from her daily life at this time in detail.

One evening she stood in the hall, having just said good-bye to her mother, who had kindly consented to her remaining at home, whilst the rest of the party went to dine with some relations. As the carriage drove off, she called Justine, her mother's maid, and asked her to go with her to the Little Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Justine was delighted. She was a well-meaning girl, a sincere papist, thought that salvation rested somewhere between the priest and a regular attendance at mass, pitied the heretics as she would the heathen; but it was not in her line to be *dévote*, though she sincerely respected all those who practised the religious austerities, which seemed to her so difficult.

She was in high spirits as she walked by the side of her young mistress, and talked much of the sisters. For her part, she liked those good working sisters best. It was very well "pour ces grandes dames de la Visitation" to sit and pray all day, except when they ate, "et on mange bien, mais très-bien, on dit qu'elles ne font jamais jeûne là bas!"—indicating with a nod the situation of the Visitation Convent; but for her part, she added, she liked the hard work, and the hard fare, for "any one who was a religieuse at all."

Thus chatting, they reached the little door of the enclosed garden belonging to the community. Quickly admitted, they were taken into the parlour, where the sisters were assembled, peeling carrots and turnips for the next day's soup. It was a branch convent, just newly planted in that vicinity; and the sisters told Maude many marvellous stories in proof of the special providence and angelic ministry exercised for them; how that, when they took possession, there were neither locks nor bars to the doors; they had planted the miraculous medal of the Virgin at the threshold, and had gone to sleep quite certain that no evil could come near them.

Now, as they made room for her at the table, and Justine disposed of herself on the floor by the side of a chubby little sister who was slicing the vegetables, they all made light of silence rules, and whilst working diligently by the light of a solitary lamp, their tongues ran on the "miracle line" with the rapidity of an express. Nothing too incredible to credit. "Regardez, Mademoiselle! All this book full of miracles worked by this wonderful medal!

If only Mademoiselle would wear one, who knows how soon the Ste. Vierge would convince her of her errors! Bah! those Protestants—what did they know of the religious life?" "Chère demoiselle, don't be deceived; we only have the real vocation." "Will mademoiselle come to-morrow, and help in the distribution of the soup? Would mademoiselle go with Sœur Claire, and see the poor brodeuse afterwards?" And so Maude began making appointments for the next day, till Sœur Madeleine remarked that it was near the end of the "recreation;" and Justine added, that they ought to be on their way back, or miladi might be returning. So they rose to depart, exchanging lively adieux; and Maude made them all laugh by suddenly kissing Sœur Madeleine, to the detriment of her stiff linen cap, and quite out of all conventual rule, but overlooked, as were many minor regulations, whenever "la jeune Anglaise" was with them.

Next day, shortly after breakfast, Maude started, and found the little sisters all busy with the poor, who, singly and in groups, were coming and going—some to the sisters' little dispensary, some to Sister Claire's tender offices of dressing wounds and anointing heads, and some waiting patiently with their cans for their turn at the soup-kitchen grating. This was a little window in the door, a ledge on each side, and within the room Maude took her place, helping Sœur Madeleine to dispense the soup. It was busy, pleasant work, and the scraps of conversation passing between the sisters and their poor pensioners amused her.

"Well, Geneviève," said Sœur Madelene to a hale

young woman, in a snow-white cap and short petticoat, "how is your mother to-day?"

"Always crying out, always in pain; can't lift her hand to her head; the flies *will* settle on her face, and she can't keep them off."

"Ah, poor soul, she does not pray enough."

"Pray! pray!—elle a beau prier. She prays to the saints all day, and they don't hear her."

"Ah, then, depend upon it, she doesn't pray rightly. She should pray to Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Wait a minute; I will give you a little prayer for her before you go. And how is your husband, mère Robert?"

"Bah! my husband? He does nothing but beat me; c'est un enragé."

"You should get him to go to mass; that would make him gentle."

"Mass! not he: he never does religion, or anything."

"Tiens! Here is a blessed medal I will give you to hide in his waistcoat. Those medals! they are wonderful! There was a brigand whose mother sewed one into his clothes, and he became as gentle as a lamb, and at last made a beautiful death, quite a miracle. It is faith you want."

At this moment, a rough-looking woman, with a baby of some months old in her arms, pushed her way through the crowd.

"Ah, my sœur, here is the child, so bad with his teeth. He has fits, which are terrible. Let him kiss one of your holy images; it will be sure to do him good."

"Yes, I know, mère Françoise. Here is our holy

founder;" and the sister took a little image from a niche near at hand, and held it out to the woman. The child caught at it, and, evidently taking it for a plaything, held it fast. The mother laughed—

"Ah, c'est qu'il aime le bon père; he will not let him go."

"Depend upon it, he is a favourite with the good saint," said Sœur Madeleine, joining in the laugh; "but he has got the head in his mouth," cried she, trying ineffectually to rescue the saint from the little votary's caresses.

"Allez, ma sœur, he won't hurt it; he has only one tooth yet; tiens, mon petit sucre; donnez-moi le bon père."

In the midst of Maude's amusement, she was startled by the appearance of a priest at her side. He had come in noiselessly; and she recognised M. l'Abbé la Forêt, one of the priests of the Visitation Convent. He said—

"Pardon me, my dear young lady; I will not interrupt you. Go on with your charitable occupation. These good sisters will allow me some conversation with you in the parlour, when this work is over."

Sœur Madeleine was glad to take the hint, and, hurrying over the soup, soon ushered Maude into the little parlour, where the Abbé was awaiting her.

"Here is Mademoiselle Maude; and may the Ste. Vierge grant you the power to convince her of her errors," said the little sister as she left the room.

Maude stood, half doubting the propriety of these conversations with M. l'Abbé, especially as Lady Deerswood had not an idea of the visits to the convents and the Roman Catholic influences which

were surrounding her. Maude had indeed spoken of the poor she had made acquaintance with, and her mother knew that she was frequently with Mrs. Willoughby, and engaged in several charitable occupations, and being unwilling to oppose her daughter in her desire for a life of retirement (though she felt increasingly the estrangement that had arisen between them), she seemed contented so long as Maude appeared in the drawing-room at certain hours, and was present at breakfast and dinner.

Maude knew that her mother would utterly disapprove of these interviews, hence her hesitation on the present occasion; but her scruples soon vanished as the priest spoke of her evident vocation for the religious life, and, carefully guarding his words, drew a comparison between the religious vocation and the ordinary life in the world. All that he said seemed to Maude so true, the very counterpart of Mother Angelica's letters, that she told him of the Westonbury Sisterhood, and her hope at some future time of joining it.

"But my dear young lady, your sisterhoods are but a counterfeit of the real thing; believe me, when I tell you, that they must all sooner or later come into the bosom of the true Church. They may be stepping-stones in the right direction, but how much better to enter at once into the true fold, where alone the glorious vocation of the religieuse is recognised and nourished! I know something of your good Dr. Oldacre, who is, I believe, the chief promoter of your sisterhoods, and I hoped some time ago that he would have brought a large body of schismatics back with himself into the Catholic Church; but he fell short

of the mark—heretical pride, which would not submit to infallible authority."

"But, M. l'Abbé, we hold all the great doctrines of the Christian faith in the Church of England."

"Stop, stop, my child; you go too fast! Where have you the guarantee for any true teaching? You have no apostolic succession, no holy orders—consequently no sacraments. You have a shell without the kernel; you are altogether outside the pale of the true church."

"Pardon me, M. l'Abbé," said Maude; "you forget that we have the authority of the Bible itself as our guarantee. We only believe what we find there."

"Most true, dear young lady, but who is to interpret to you the sacred Scriptures? Has Christ given authority to His priests to minister the truth to His church, or is each individual to judge for himself, and so wrest the Scriptures to his own destruction? Look at the infinite divisions in your heretical church, which has assumed to itself the right of private judgment! Is it possible that the Saviour would have left His church to be rent in pieces? On the contrary, did He not say to St. Peter, 'On this rock will I build my church?'"

The Abbé proceeded to dwell upon the power of the keys, till Maude became rather bewildered; but though quite unaccustomed to controversy, she was yet well enough instructed in the grand doctrines of the Christian faith, and she adroitly turned the conversation back to these, saying that all who trusted in the Saviour would be saved, whatever error in judgment with regard to the power of the keys they might make.

The conversation was a lengthy one, and was succeeded by another in the parlour of the Visitation Convent not long after. A sermon was also preached expressly for her—a neuvaine of prayer held for her—books lent to her—and every endeavour made by her Roman Catholic friends to convert her to what they considered the true faith. Maude thought that her only safety now would be to be really at work in the Westonbury Sisterhood. There, at all events, was the sister of mercy's life to be found in her own church. She wrote again to Mother Angelica, stating all her doubts and difficulties, spoke of what M. l'Abbé said about the Anglican Sisterhoods soon coming into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church, and asked if the Superior would not receive her at once at Westonbury, even without her mother's consent. She received the following letter in reply :—

"My dearest Child,

"I am deeply touched by your letter of entreaty to be received here at once, without your mother's consent. You are right in supposing that God is speaking to your heart. He is leading and guiding you onwards, and He *will* bring you into the haven where you would be. Do not doubt it for an instant, only remain faithful and humble; think of yourself as ever kneeling under the shadow of the ✠ at His sacred feet, and you will be safe. Dear child, your letter tells me just what I concluded would be the case if you followed the advice I sent you. You are now passing through a discipline which is needed for the spiritual welfare of your soul. My only anxiety for you is that you should be firm: pray every day for the grace of perseverance. 'What I do thou

knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' Recollect these words, dear child: you will find that they are very true in your life at this time.

"I have but one counsel to give you, and that is stern and deep enough. It goes to my heart to say it; but, as I love your soul, and as I believe that God has given you to me to be my child, I *must* say it. Continue *firm* in adhering to the rules I gave you for your external life: God will overrule all for good, let what will happen. You may have to go through fire and water, but remember it is for the sake of our Lord, and He will never leave those who trust in Him.

"I do not say what I shall hereafter do. I cannot look forward; neither do I tell my children (and you are now to me as one of them) more than one step at a time.

"*Trust* in God, and *obey* those to whom He leads you for direction, and be assured all will be well. Recollect these words:—

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step's enough for me.

"Write often to me, dear child, as often as you will, and tell me all within you and without you. Whenever I need for further direction, I will write to you, please God. I wish you to trust me fully and entirely, and with the simplicity of a little child. May the Lord strengthen, guide, support, cheer, and enlighten

you through your time of trial. In this life, also, you will have trial: for such is the need of the soul. It must be purified and strengthened here as well as in the world, and your present discipline *is* preparing you for the wonderful and sacramental life to which He has, we trust, called you, and which, if you continue firm, may be nearer to you than you now imagine possible. Continue earnest in prayer, and in the study of the life of our blessed Lord: refuse to go out into society, but seek Him whom your soul loveth in retirement. Only refuse in a humble spirit, and in few and gentle words, and lift up your heart to your Lord as you speak. Refuse also to dress in any way which is against your conscience. Called to a close union with the Beloved, the Chief among ten thousand, you may not adorn yourself for other eyes. But, dear child, do all in a 'meek and quiet spirit,' and the Lord will regard the lowliness of His handmaiden, and will help and sustain you in this sorrowful strife.

"I should wish you to use the Psalms very much in devotion, and to commit some to memory, that you may be able to repeat them when occupied with other things. Try and commend the future, day by day, to God; you have only to live through each day according to His will, and He will prepare and strengthen you for the next. It will be a bitter trial to you to leave your mother; but it is a trial to which many of the saints of God have been called. Only let it come from *her*. It is your duty to wait until she send you away; and then recollect the solemn warning, 'He that loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.' My child, those awful words must surely have deep meaning—they

must mean that we are to obey the voice of our God, speaking through conscience, or through any other way appointed by Him, rather than the voice of filial affection. Continue, therefore, in the rule of life to which He has called you. Continue in prayer, in meditation, in strictness of life, in retirement, in separation from the world whilst under your mother's roof, and believe my assurances, my dear child, believe me, when I say that you will be led by paths that you know not unto eternal rest and ineffable union with your Lord.

"May He ever bless you. May His love dwell in you, and overshadow you. May His peace rest with you now and evermore.

"In Him,

"Your very affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

This letter was enclosed to Maude in an envelope addressed to one of her Roman Catholic friends, whose direction in Paris she had given to the Superior, as Lady Deerswood objected to her corresponding with any of the Sisterhood at Westonbury. She was now more than ever with her new friends. The sisters of St. Vincent de Paul had introduced another priest, Père François, to her, who took quite a different line of argument to M. l'Abbé. The latter dwelt almost exclusively upon the authority of the church —the power of the keys—and often told Maude that, when once she submitted herself to that truth, spiritual light as to special doctrines would dawn upon her soul; but Père François spoke enthusiastically of the religious life—of the evident vocation Maude had—of the heights of spiritual perfection to which she

might attain, perhaps even to the high altitude of a canonized saint! . . . .

The assumed authority and dogmatic teaching of the Church of Rome was daily more impressing her mind. A fear that what the priests said about the peril her soul was in, might be true, and that she was indeed resisting the Holy Spirit drawing and leading her back into the true church, which her heretical ancestors had protested against—an overwhelming thought that if it were true that the apostolic succession was necessary to the right administration of the Lord's Supper, and that the Church of England had it not—in that case, consequently, she had never received the Eucharist—the impossibility, from her want of knowledge, of controverting the subtle reasoning she had to encounter—this, and much more which we have no time to detail, made her most wretched in mind—till at last a calm succeeded. She was convinced that the authority of the church ought to be taken on all matters of faith. What she could not accept on conviction, she thought she would be able to take on the authority of the church—the doctrine of development seemed to solve so many difficulties. She thought she knew now where the *truth was*, and that Père François was right in urging her as he did to go into the Convent of the Visitation "*en retraite*" for a time, to learn all those truths more fully, preparatory to being received into the Roman Catholic Church.

She communicated the state of her mind to Mrs. Rivers, who at once gained from her a promise that she would wait a year at least, to examine more deeply into the subject—away, too, from Roman Catholic influences—and begged her to return to

England with her at once. Having made this promise, Maude felt herself bound to keep it—especially as she was not certain that the Roman Catholic Church was right—and it was this conviction which enabled her to resist the arguments of her Romanist friends.

So enthralled was she at that time with the fascination of what she conceived might be the truth in the Romish Church, that, but for this promise, she would have taken the advice given in the following letter from a young Roman Catholic lady, who, as Maude subsequently learned, had intended taking her, if possible, to the Convent of the Visitation the evening of the expected visit mentioned in the letter:—

"Dear Miss Deerswood,

"I have been anxiously expecting you all the afternoon and evening. M. l'Abbé came to our house at half-past six in hopes of meeting you, and was greatly distressed not to find you here. He begs me to tell you that you *ought* in *conscience* to give up your intention of going to England; he thinks (and all of your friends here are of his opinion) that you cannot, if you are really convinced of the truth of our religion, remain *wilfully* in error one *long year*. Remember, dearest girl, that you deprive yourself, by thus doing, of all the graces conferred by the reception of the sacraments, and how can you be certain of remaining with your faith unshaken when you thus expose yourself to temptations, and trials of every description; and are you sure that God will grant you life another year?

"M. l'Abbé begs me to say, that if you sincerely

wish to act in a manner agreeable to God, you have only *un seul parti à prendre*—to leave your house without saying a word to your family—to go to the Visitation, and there to write to your mamma to say that you feel it is for you a sacred duty to save your soul *à tout prix*, and that you are determined to make a retreat at the Visitation previous to your being received into the Catholic Church. I feel deeply for you, my dearest friend; allow me to give you this endearing appellation; for I not only feel a deep, lively, warm interest in you, but a real *affection de cœur*. I can perfectly understand all your feelings; I can enter into the sufferings of your fond, affectionate heart, so full of feeling and tenderness towards your family; but remember, dearest, you must not sacrifice your soul and your *eternal salvation* for *human love*. M. l'Abbé says you must not consider the promise you made to your family as binding in any way; you made it at a moment of mental agony, when your mind was bewildered, and led into error by your too feeling heart. You thought, I know, dearest, that you acted right in promising not to enter our church for a year; but, in fact, you made a promise against your conscience, you are not bound to keep it; on the contrary, if you wish to act according to the will of God, you must break that fatal promise. If you have not the courage to leave your family, I fear you will deeply regret the step you are taking. We are all most anxious and most unhappy about you; many prayers have been offered up for your perseverance. May God protect you, and give you strength and consolation, is the fond wish and ardent prayer of your devoted friend,

"ALICE."

Enclosed was a note from the sisters of charity, urging the same line of action. Maude gave the letters to Mrs. Rivers, who, seriously alarmed at the danger her sister was in, persuaded Lady Deerswood to consent to her going to England immediately on a visit of three months to the Westonbury Sisterhood. Maude wrote to Mother Angelica a short note, merely to say that she had obtained her mother's consent; but not entering into the detail of what had passed since she last wrote.

On her return to England with Mrs. Rivers she received the following note from Sister Ursula, and a few days after its receipt was on her way to Westonbury:—

"My very dear Maude,

"Yours was indeed a note full of news of joy, which Mother now bids me answer. Thanks be to God, who has been so gracious to you! It must be almost too much after your long time of waiting and hoping. I can sympathize with you. When the time really comes it seems as if *oneself* had been one's object; but I feel more and more now that it must be God's blessed Spirit which is leading a person where they know not at such a time, and that such thoughts are but temptations. One's own strength must have failed in that wrench of parting from all one loved; at the present moment you feel, as you look back, you could not do what was then done. It was God's work in you, leading and drawing you on, and yet you knew it not. I do rejoice with you; it is such wonderful goodness and love to be chosen to work among those devoted to His service, to lead an angel's life on earth, ministering and waiting upon Him! May this

be, indeed, your life here! May His full flood of light and love be with you! Mother bids me tell you to come any day, the earlier the better; but she would like you very much to be here before the 27th. On that day the bishop is coming to lay the first stone of our new building, and she would like you to have his blessing with us. I am sure you will try your best not to miss this. There is to be also an octave of services in St. Mark's church.

"May our Lord Himself comfort and strengthen you in these days, painful and harassing as they must be to you!

"You have already found—'Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.'

"Believe me, your very affectionate, in Him,

"URSULA, S. M."

Thus had Maude been enabled to realize her wish, and with her mother's consent to enter a sisterhood; but how had she attained that wish? By making her mother feel that all comfort in the society of her child was gone, and that it was happiest for both that she should part from a daughter who now lived at home as a stranger. Was this carrying out the Scripture precepts, to "honour our parents," and to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"?

## CHAPTER III.

### "RELIGIOUS LIFE" AT WESTONBURY.

AFTER a long and weary journey Maude arrived at Westonbury. On reaching the house occupied by the sisters she was shown into a little parlour, and left alone for a long time till a sister came in, tall and graceful, with a sweet face and yet sweeter smile; she greeted Maude most affectionately. "Dear Maude, I cannot think of you as a stranger; I seem to know you so well. I am sister Ursula." She wore a black serge dress with long, hanging sleeves, a black silk cord for a girdle, and a cross of black wood hanging to it; over her cropped head she wore a little white cap with black strings.

After a few inquiries Sister Ursula said she was too busy to stay, but would send Maude some tea, and come to fetch her for the compline service. Another long time alone: for, after a serving sister had silently brought in a cup of tea and a plate of bread and butter, no one came into the room. There was an alms box, and a book of homilies on the table; and as it grew dark, she was nearly asleep when Sister Ursula returned and beckoned her to follow. Dead silence reigned through the house as they ascended the staircase, when the sister, without speaking, opened a door and they entered the Oratory.

The compline service had just been begun, and Maude's first impression of what she saw around her was most pleasing. The dark kneeling figures of the sisters at the low desks—the altar, with its white silk covering—the lighted candles and the bright flowers —the three steps at the end of the room covered with crimson cloth, and forming the stand for a large wooden cross, nearly as high as the room—the little lamps of antique form on the lowest step—the chanting of the Psalms, blended with the solemn tones of the small organ—all combined to gratify her sense of the picturesque and ideal in religious worship. She took her place at the little desk nearest the door, to which Sister Ursula motioned her, and thanked God that she was at last really in the sisterhood.

The service ended, the sisters went up one by one to what Maude had not yet remarked—the desks hiding it from her view—a low couch on the floor (at the foot of a white silk cross attached to the hangings of the wall), where the Mother Superior was reclining. She blessed them in a whisper individually, signed them with the sign of the cross, and kissed them on the forehead: they then kissed her hand, still kneeling, and one by one went out, taking their lamps from the steps close by, and bowing low as they reached the door.

When all were gone the Mother rose, and motioned Maude to the altar, on which was a picture of the Crucifixion, candles, one or two illuminated manuscripts, and an Hebrew Bible. Both knelt, and, taking one of the books, the Superior read some prayers appropriate to the occasion, after which she left the Oratory without speaking. Maude followed her up the staircase and through passages till they

reached the Mother's private sitting room, when, for the first time, the Superior spoke to her, and welcomed her affectionately, and she was soon seated on a low stool by the Mother's chair, telling her of all that had happened in Paris since she last wrote, and how nearly she had gone into the Convent of the Visitation, instead of coming to England.

The Superior said she knew it all, having received a letter from a Roman Catholic lady, and she was not surprised: for she thought that Maude was very ignorant of church principles. The church of Christ was but one; there were three communions in that church—the Anglican, the Roman, and the Greek; but, desirable as it was that they should be united outwardly, still there was the sin of schism in leaving one communion for another. In the Anglican Church Maude would find all that she could desire—all that she brought forward, as peculiar to the Romish communion, the Anglican Church had always held.

"But," said Maude, looking up, "why is the vocation of the religious life so ignored in our church? only here and there a sisterhood, and such difficulty in belonging to it!"

The Mother smiled. "I think, my child, that you will find here all that you need. The Anglo-Catholic Church has always upheld the religious vocation, though for a time it has been suffered to sleep. Here, in our little community, is the religious life to be found in all its integrity, and blessed by a bishop of the church. The blessed eucharist is received by my children morning by morning. You have but to be humble, and teachable, dearest child, and you will find that your own church gives you all that your soul can need."

She then said that she could not but receive one whom God had led to her, but that the society would suffer if in the end Maude should enter the communion of Rome; and she cautioned her not to speak to any in the community of what had passed in Paris. She rose, and saying, "Now I must leave you for a time," gave her a book—"Paradise of the Christian Soul"—open at "Prayers before the Holy Communion," and left her, thankful and relieved to find that after all there might be more of real oneness with Rome than her early Protestant training had led her to believe possible.

When the Mother returned, it was only to show Maude her room at the end of a passage outside the door. "Go now, my child, sleep, and may the holy angels watch over you." Maude, thoroughly tired, hardly remarked her little room, bare and unfurnished, she was soon fast asleep on the hard bed.

It was early next morning when she was awakened by Sister Ursula, with the customary "Laus Deo." She opens her eyes. "Can you be ready in half an hour?" said the sister. "I will come for you," and she was gone.

The whitewashed walls and the uncarpeted floor of her room delighted Maude; it was so cell-like. Following Sister Ursula, in silence, when she reappeared, they went into a room hung round with black shawls, cloaks, bonnets; and under each peg were ranged boots and shoes. A peg was pointed out to her, and she was soon enveloped in a long cloak, an enormous black bonnet and thick veil—the sisters wore crape veils. Some ten or twelve figures similarly attired stood at the gate, and pre-

sently they proceeded, two and two, to St. Mark's church, not far distant, where they received holy communion, one or two other persons only being in the church. The service over, they returned, consigned bonnets and cloaks to their respective pegs, in profound silence, and took their places in the refectory, where was a long table covered with plates of bread and butter, coarsely-dressed bacon, and cups of coffee. The sister at the top of the table gave the benediction and returned thanks—no other words were spoken. Again were the cloaks and bonnets donned, and the black procession was soon in church, leading and followed by schools of boys and girls, and a dozen or so of old people, all part and parcel of the sisterhood work. The morning prayers were intoned, and the children and old people seemed to take great delight in loud nasal responses.

Maude was somewhat distressed at the apparent hurry of both priest and people ; but it was only the foretaste of that busy religiousness which was henceforth to characterize her convent days.

Prayers were ended, then with many bobs from the children, short inclinations of the head from the old people, and profound bendings from the sisters, towards the altar, the church was left not to be re-entered—except individually when any sister went to confession—till seven o'clock, when the same black procession daily took place.

Maude, again divested of cloak and bonnet, followed some of the sisters into the recreation room, where silence rule was relaxed for a short time, and she learned to know some of the sisters and novices by name. Over the chimney-piece was a picture which arrested

her attention; it was of the resurrection, and represented all the holy dead rising from their graves. On the right hand, popes, cardinals, and high dignitaries of the church rose mitred and coped, next followed the religious orders—nuns and monks. One sweet face, that of a young friar, struck her, the expression of simple joyous surprise as he found himself rising with the grandees of the religious orders, was most happily drawn by the artist.

"There goes 'Terce,'" said a young novice at her side, and she followed the sisters to the Oratory for this third service, seven of which, according to the Old Sarum Psalter, were carried on through the day, exclusive of the church services, making ten services altogether, in the course of the twenty-four hours. "Matins" and "Lauds" were generally got over over night, and "Prime" was recited in the Oratory in the morning, before going to holy communion. "Terce," "Sext," "Nones," "Vespers," and "Compline," completed the canonical hours.

Maude left the Oratory with the novices when the Terce service was over, the sisters remaining to read one of the rules of the order—the rules were read in rotation every day; but of these rules Maude as yet knew nothing.

And now the hard work of the day began. A sister named Thyrza came up to Maude, who had returned to the recreation room, and told her she was to work with her among the poor, and that it was now time to start. They went to the store-room, and filling two baskets with small packets of groceries, Sister Thyrza gave one to Maude, and proceeded to put on the shawl and bonnet. As they passed on to

the kitchen, several cans of soup and loaves of bread stood ready on the dresser, and they went out into the street with their hands fully laden.

For the first time Maude realized herself as really a sister of mercy, and a strange feeling of exultation filled her heart; she felt that she could walk miles in her thick shoes, and carry no end of things in her gloveless hands, and, with a glowing love to all whom she met, help to mitigate the sorrow and suffering around her; she knew not how much of mere sentiment and romance was mingled with her really deep feeling of benevolence and devotedness.

On they went through the crowded streets till they reached the low neighbourhood where Sister Thyrza was now working. Entering the large court, and making their way through the lines of wet clothes hanging up on strings to dry above, they stopped at a door; within was a woman over the wash-tub, and a set of half-naked, dirty children playing around. Three or four men were at the top of the court, playing pitch-and-toss, with lazy, noisy quarrelling, and against the door of this house leant a ruffianly-looking man, with a red handkerchief, and a black patch over his eye, smoking a short pipe, with his hands in his pockets. He hardly moved to let Maude pass him, but Sister Thyrza stood still a moment, and addressed him—

"I am sorry, Mr. Cripps, that you have not got any work yet. I am afraid you must be badly off in here."

"No worse off than others," answered the man, with a muffled imprecation, and turning away on his heel. They entered the room.

"Well, Mrs. Cripps," said the sister, "hard at it, as

usual. You have enough to do to keep all those children, now your husband is out of work."

"The lazy blackguard!" burst out the woman, in suppressed rage. "I slaves and I slaves, all the day and every day, and can't even keep the bits of rag clean and the childer's stomachs full; and he's a rowing and a drinking up every mouthful, and won't work, bad luck to him, not when he can get it;" and, plunging her arms into the wash-tub, she went on with her work, with heightened colour and a heaving breast.

"Poor Mrs. Cripps! It is very hard for you; but let us hope better times are coming. You are trying to do your best; and if you would only try to get to church, and send the children to school, you might get your husband to do better."

"'T'aint no use talking to me of church-going. What would I be a doing at church without a rag to my back?"

"But you know, Mrs. Cripps, if you really wished to go, I have promised to get you a shawl and bonnet."

The woman only rubbed on the harder, and seemed determined to give no heed to the sister; church-going evidently did not approve itself to her mind; but the well-filled baskets and soup-cans had not escaped her eye, and possibly enabled her to keep down the fiery temper which irritated feeling and real misery generally brought to the surface.

Meanwhile Maude had occupied herself with the children. One dark-eyed little creature made a grab at the cross hanging at Sister Thyrza's side. She rescued it, saying,

"Would little boy like to have some soup?"

The little ones ran up to the wash-tub, crying,

"Mammy, mammy, see what the lady's got!"

Mammy evidently relaxed a little; and, wringing her hands, wiping them and her mouth at the same moment with the corner of her apron, she took down from a dirty shelf a large jug without spout or handle.

"Now, little ones," said the sister, "mammy will give you some soup;" and she poured half of the contents of the can into the jug. Maude saw the little famished creatures licking the sides of the jug where the soup had poured over, and the hungry mother looking into it herself with a degree of satisfaction.

"Thank you kindly, Miss," she said. "The childer be very hungry, and that's the truth."

"And here is a packet of tea and some sugar for you, and rice for the children; and I do hope," continued the sister, "that you will try and go to church. St. Mark's is not so very far off, and the schools are nearer for the children. When you make up your mind to send them, I will bring you some nice frocks and pinafores."

Not a word did Mrs. Cripps say in reply; but she made a kind of curtsey as they left the door, and then turned round and cuffed her eldest little boy, who had got his hand into the jug. Maude saw this as she passed, and with saddened feeling she followed Sister Thyrza, who walked briskly on without speaking. Silence was observed strictly throughout the morning, except when it was absolutely necessary for the work to speak.

The above was a pretty fair specimen of the kind of scenes met with at many houses they visited.

Maude was inexpressibly pained at much she saw, but rejoiced in the power of carrying even a little alleviation; their store of grocery was soon exhausted, and names were taken down for next day's relief in that district. After a circuit of three hours they returned just in time for dinner in the refectory. Silence rule not being relaxed, they took their places at a long, narrow table, covered with a coarse cloth, with pewter plates, horn tankards, steel forks, and plain, plentiful food. Whilst the eating was going on, one sister was reading aloud; but Maude's attention was taken up in conjecturing what offence had been committed by a novice, who sat on the ground, away from the table, looking very disconsolate, with her plate on her lap. She afterward learned that Novice Eldred was under discipline for insubordination.

After the dinner was over, and half an hour spent in the recreation room—where talking was allowed—Maude and Sister Thyrza resumed their visiting labours in another part of the town, returning in time for supper. This was followed by evening service at the church—after which the compline service in the Oratory, at which the Mother Superior was sometimes present, but not often. This rule of work continued to be Maude's for several weeks. She went in all weathers: often her dress was soaked with rain, and her feet wet with mud. The wind, sometimes taking advantage of her hands being loaded, almost carried her off her feet as she crossed an exposed, bleak hill. But she went on courageously, becoming deeply interested in her work, till one day she broke rule by giving unauthorized relief to a poor dying child, whose mother ran out of a house as she passed,

entreating her to come in, and, seeing her hesitation, said she had been up to the sisters, and had been promised relief as soon as some one who was out visiting came in. Maude knew that she was the only one giving relief in that district, and naturally concluded she would not be wrong to give what help she could. For this act of judging for herself, the Superior thought it necessary to suspend her for some days from visiting.

One morning, some weeks later, as she was in readiness to go her round among the poor, she received a sudden summons to attend the Mother Superior. Putting down the basket and can, she entered the Mother's presence, with the usual curtsey at the door, and stood waiting for orders, for it was contrary to rule to speak to the Mother first, or to take a seat in her presence uninvited.

Mother Angelica was seated at a table writing, and continued her occupation without looking up. Ten minutes passed—twenty minutes—half-an-hour—still no recognition of Maude. She thought of the poor she knew were expecting her; calculated how to make up for lost time; began to question in her own mind the wisdom of detaining her there doing nothing; felt tired of standing; began to feel vexed; and, at last, the suspicion crossed her mind that the Superior was putting her patience purposely to the test.

"Did you send for me, dear Mother?" she said, at last.

The Superior looked up with a half smile.

"Come here, Maude; I wished to give you some alteration of rule. I wish you to take the evening

prayers at the Home of Hope. I wish, also, to give you a rule book."

Maude was now kneeling by her side. The Superior laid her hand on her head. "Precious child," she added, "you have much to learn, and you must not get too much absorbed by your outer work."

"O Mother, dear! it is such an overwhelming interest,—all those poor people. Till lately I had no idea of the amount of distress and ignorance: it seems as if one could do so little to stem the tide of misery."

"And are you quite satisfied with your life here, Maude?"

"Quite, dear Mother; it only seems too good to last."

The Mother smiled, and, giving her a little clasped manuscript book, said, "Here, Maude, is a 'little soul' for you—you will find the direction for your work in it—and send it to me every morning with the sisters' books; and besides the account of your rule, I wish you to make a special recollection every three hours, going into the Oratory when you can, and write down all your thoughts from hour to hour as best you can recall them."

The Mother then proceeded to give her various directions, and put into her hands a book called "The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection," by Rodriguez, a Jesuit, written for the Society of Jesus, which she was to read to herself at supper time. She also spoke of confession, told Maude that she did not urge it on any souls, because God taught souls to value it; and that persons could be but little advanced in the Christian life who did not avail

themselves of it—that when she wished for a spiritual director she would recommend her to choose either Dr. Oldacre or Mr. Leigh.

Maude said that she often thought of what M. l'Abbé had said about the inefficiency of confession in the Anglican Church, that where there was no apostolic succession there could be no absolution. After some conversation the Mother ended the interview with a smile, assuring Maude that she had much yet to learn, and dismissed her with an impression on her mind which she would have found it hard to define, except as a general sense of self-distrust as to her own spiritual state. She felt she was, indeed, a "novice," and longed ardently to attain to those heights of spiritual perfection which she was taught were to be found in the religious life.

The "little souls" were sent to the Mother Superior every morning; each sister laid her own on the table in the recreation room; no one touched them but Sister Ursula, who gathered them all up and took them on the Mother's breakfast tray—for Mother Angelica seldom rose till late in the day—and trays of breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper were duly carried in and out, generally by Sister Ursula. Often for days together the Superior was invisible to the community at large, although able to transact business, see priests, and write letters in her own apartments, and have with her such sisters or novices as she chose to send for.

Maude could not but see that there was favouritism shown, and many ill-feelings and subdued jealousies rife in the sisterhood: one sister complained to her once that she had not seen the Superior for months, though all the time she had daily communication with

her through her manuscript book, the "little soul," and was constantly expecting to be summoned into her presence; another sister once slammed a door in Maude's face in jealous anger, as she saw her quitting the Mother's rooms.

But to return to the "little souls." She faithfully wrote for several weeks an account of her thoughts, though it was perplexing at times to write for the Mother's eye comments on the Superior herself. No allusion to the "little soul" was ever made by the Mother; but when at the end of some time the rule of the every "three hours' written recollection" was taken off, the Mother Superior must have had a pretty good idea of the tenour of Maude's mind.

And so the days passed on. We will go with Maude one evening during this time, when she was carrying out her rule of reading prayers nightly at the lodging houses.

Rising from her knees during Compline service in the Oratory at a quarter to nine, in the depth of winter, Maude left the warm, dimly lighted Oratory, heavy with the perfume of withered leaves and winter flowers, for the wardrobe room, where she felt in the dark for her shoes, shawl, and bonnet, passing out into the cold night air. Why was she so agitated? it seemed as if she could hardly persuade herself to go on. We have but to walk by her side down Alders Lane, to Giffords Street, that winter night; the cold drizzling rain—the narrow streets slushed with thick mud—were nothing, comparatively, for Maude was accustomed now to walk in all weathers (umbrellas and gloves were unknown in the sisterhood); but she had never before come in contact with such sights

and sounds as she had been exposed to these last few weeks, in which it had been her duty to go down to the lodging houses to read evening prayers; the streets she had to pass were in the worst part of the town, filled with public-houses, and the groups of drunken, quarrelling people she had to pass, shocked and terrified her.

On this occasion she thought she would avoid the worst street by making a detour down a bye path. It was quiet and solitary; but as she approached a corner of the road, she heard the sound of music and voices in a public-house she must pass; hurrying on, she stumbled just beyond the open door, and fell into a thick pool of mud. She felt herself saturated in a moment, and rose with face, dress, and hands covered with mud. Should she go on or turn back? On, certainly. The matron at the lodging house would help her; and so Maude, having scraped off what mud she could, washed her hands and face, and turned her shawl, went in to read the psalms and prayers to the assembled lodgers. Prayers over, she returned by the dreaded street, but her alarms were not over, for two drunken soldiers, fighting just in her pathway, obliged her to cross the road, and she hurried on as one of them threw his cap at her, till she almost ran, and breathless, and with a beating heart, she reached home. It was with indescribable feelings of rest and peace that she re-entered the Oratory and found herself kneeling at her accustomed place.

But the constant repetition of these dreaded walks was a severe trial to her. In vain she endeavoured to fortify her mind by reminding herself that she had come to serve the poor; that it was a good disci-

pline, and was fitting her for the hardships she must learn to endure as a sister of mercy; that it was cowardly to shrink back at the first real trial. Notwithstanding all these arguments, she suffered so much that she at last told the Mother, who sympathised with her, giving her courage, by speaking of the angelic beings who, though unseen, accompanied her in these walks. She added that though these scenes were trying to nature, yet that grace would sustain her; and she ended by giving Maude a rosary of beads to the Holy Trinity that she might hold in her hand and repeat a prayer on each bead as she took her dreaded walk.

Maude's veneration for the Superior, and the halo thrown in her mind over every rule or regulation connected with the religious life, was daily on the increase, and the rosary was diligently used, though her rule was not long after changed, and she was not sent again to the lodging houses.

She was now often sent for by the Mother Superior. All rule was at standstill when the Mother pleased, and admittance to her room was considered a great privilege and pleasure. All the sisters regarded the Mother apparently with the greatest affection, though some of them hardly saw her except in the Oratory. She was always addressed by them as "dearest Mother," and she spoke to them in equally affectionate terms. To Maude she was always most caressing in manner. She generally spoke to her as her "precious child;" but, in spite of this, Maude, when she first entered the sisterhood, had an undefined dread of her resting on her mind, and this was involuntarily manifested in her manner, so

that the Superior one day asked her the reason of her coldness towards her. Maude then confessed to her the kind of feeling she had of not understanding her, and the Superior replied: "In a religious house, my precious child, where there are always a number of good angels, bad spirits abound also, and try to do mischief. It is some evil spirit which makes you distrust me; and, strangely enough, at about the same time I have been tempted to distrust myself."

Maude, however, gradually found that all distrust of the Superior vanished, and after a few months she learned to regard her with warm affection and unbounded confidence, and though much that was said and done in the sisterhood she could not understand, yet she was convinced that it arose from her own lack of spiritual apprehension.

She had been diligently reading "Christian Perfection," as directed by the Superior; but she came, in the course of her study, upon a passage she could not at all apprehend. It seemed to her to describe, not spiritual perfection, but an absolute want of common sense. She told this to the Superior in one of her long private conversations.

"What is it, my precious child?" she asked.

Maude repeated the following incident: Two monks were sitting together, one reading a passage of Holy Scripture to the other. "What are your thoughts on this passage?" said the reader to the listener. "Brother, read it again," said the other; he had not been attending; his eyes had been wandering over the landscape where men were working in the distance. He was so abashed at his own absence of mind when Holy Writ was being read,

that he put an iron collar round his neck, with a chain, which he riveted to his ankle, so that he could not lift his head; and this he wore till his death. Maude had been forcibly struck, while reading this passage, with the resemblance it bore to the self-inflicted tortures of the Hindoos, and questioned in her mind whether the poor fanatic Hindoo's self-torments might not also have in them some divine efficacy. Both seemed to contradict common sense. Was self-inflicted bodily torture really acceptable to God? She could understand self-sacrifice for the good of others, and see the beauty of suffering, even to the death, for the truth; but what good could there be in a penance like that described?

The Mother merely told her, in reply, that she would give her another book; she was not yet sufficiently advanced in the "divine life" to comprehend "Christian Perfection;" and Maude felt humbled, and quite willing to believe that the fault lay in her own defective spirituality.

A volume of Dr. Oldacre's sermons was substituted for "Christian Perfection." She was now subject to much change of work. For some weeks she was in the kitchen, learning, besides cooking, the household work of washing dishes, cleaning grates, sweeping, and scrubbing, which last she always lacked strength to succeed in.

Then she had charge of a ragged school; and as the boys and girls were gathered in one room, and were all of the lowest and roughest, it was difficult work to keep order, especially at the distribution of the basket of broken bread and cutting up of loaves for the daily meal given to them.

After this she taught in the Orphan School, the Industrial School, and the Old People's Home, all institutions connected with the sisterhood. This last was for beggars, and many were the disappointments connected with it, for the "travellers" frequently went off when fine weather came, sometimes abusing the sisters for having induced them to lose so much time, whilst they had been fed, housed, and clothed by them. There was also a school for boys, who were brought up for sailors; and owing to the capability and devotion of thought and attention to it which the sister in charge gave, it was the most efficient part of the work; and the merry laughter of the boys, and the Christmas festivities prepared for them, showed at all events that they were well cared for.

The Mother Superior was always starting some fresh work, and, as there were but five sisters, the novices were often called upon to fill up sisters' places. This lessened the pressure of work in the community, but still there was absolutely more to be done than could be accomplished, and Maude saw that some of the sisters were exerting themselves far beyond their strength, but their rule never spared them. Often, when wearied out, and longing for a few moments' rest in the Oratory, they would receive orders to go here or there, do this or that, which order admitted of no appeal and no evasion; and in the strength of Holy Obedience (of which more anon), they were expected to be able to do anything and everything that the Superior might order to be done even if, as in many cases, it was quite apparent to them that it was not worth the wear and tear to mind and body involved in it.

Often the exhausted sister was roused at night from her sleep to take a parcel to the station, a letter for the mail train, or a message to one of the sister's houses, which might well have waited till morning; but all orders came from Mother Angelica, and there was no parleying allowed.

Few were allowed to keep strict fast, but with those few the rule was imperative. One sister told Maude that she missed her butter during Lent dreadfully, while at the same time Maude herself was never allowed to forego the fat coarse bacon which she so disliked at breakfast; but fasting or eating, all was according to the Superior's orders, and must not be questioned.

The recreation room was seldom entered for weeks or months by some of the sisters, and the services in the Oratory were often carried on by two or three individuals only.

One sister, or novice, by turn had charge of the Oratory. Flowers were always had when procurable; always green leaves and berries in winter, if nothing brighter could be had; but on festivals, hot-house flowers were sent for; and on the occasion of an Admittance Service, flowers were sent down from London, packed in wool.

Maude had never thought flowers more lovely, or their perfume so sweet, as when she unpacked and arranged them in the sisterhood, where, from day to day, and from hour to hour, the eye only came in contact with the rough and hard working, the dust and the dirt of poor life. Poverty was called, in the Rules, "the solid heritage of the religious life," and some of the sisters carried out its requirements more than was pleasant to their neighbours. The

same serge dress was worn from month to month —in the Ragged School, in the Oratory, in all weather—and was often colonized by intruders very difficult to get rid of. All the sisters had their heads cropped, which was a most necessary precaution, as their "solid heritage" excluded all the minor details of cleanliness and personal carefulness. Mirrors were not allowed in the sisterhood. Of water a very limited supply was provided. Sister Ursula reproved Maude once or twice for washing her hands during the day, and smiled at the horror she expressed of the state of another sister's dress and head. But Maude had yet much to learn of the requirements of Holy Poverty, as we shall see later.

Many who read these details will be tempted to ask whether it is acting in the spirit of our Lord's precepts and practice to impose *unnecessary* suffering on those who are labouring in His service. Was it at His call that young girls were made to pass nightly through scenes so unfit for their age and sex? and this not to save life or relieve suffering, but simply to comply with regulations which might easily have been differently arranged?

Was it His will, who "had compassion on the multitude, lest they should faint by the way,"—who told His disciples to "pray that their flight might not be in the winter," and did not forget the young mothers with their babes, even when on His way to death,—that these young creatures should endure *needless* privations, and even neglect that personal cleanliness which we see in Scripture is regarded as akin to purity of mind? Did not all this savour rather of "will worship" than of Christian self-denial?

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONFESSIONAL.

IT was during the first few months of Maude's residence in the new sisterhood that she had a good deal of conversation with Mother Angelica on the subject of confession. It was practised by all the sisters in the community, as far as Maude knew, and Dr. Oldacre was Father Confessor to the Superior, Sister Ursula, and one or two others. Maude always held back from confession, thinking that, unless the church ordered it—as in the Romish Communion—there was a doubt as to its efficacy. However, she often thought it possible that Mother Angelica was right, and that she was as yet too unenlightened to see its value. Speaking on the subject with the Superior one day, Maude said that she remembered being struck with the remark of a Roman Catholic priest, who said that an English lady told him she had been induced, in a case of great distress of mind, to confess to her clergyman, and that next day she found his wife knew it all.

The Mother Superior in reply said, that until there were religious societies of men in the church, which was much to be desired, the confessors must be those who held the cures, whether married or single; but she would never urge confession on her children, as

she knew God would teach them its value if needful for their souls.

Soon after this conversation, Maude was directed to work with one of the sisters, with whom she had not as yet been associated. They set out on a long walk together, and presently Sister Monica said: "Mother said we might talk this morning, dear; and I am so glad of it, as I wanted particularly to speak to you about confession. I wish you could value it as we do."

"If I could be sure that it would be a help to me I would willingly use it. Have you practised it long, Sister Monica?"

"O yes, dear, long before I came into community; Mr. Gildcraft was my confessor for two years, and he was such a blessing to me! The first thing he did was to bid me put away all my books, and to read nothing but the 'Lives of the Saints.' He told me to be as much in churches as possible, and especially near to the altars. He used to speak much of the religious life; he saw that I had a vocation, and he used often to say to me, 'Gertrude, you will never be happy till you are in community.'"

"And does he guide you still?" asked Maude.

"No; when I came here he gave up my direction; he said he could not guide souls at a distance, and recommended me to Dr. Oldacre; but he said he thought we ought to have a resident confessor here, and that Mother Angelica's community would never prosper without one."

"Well, I suppose it may be some fault in me," said Maude; "but I cannot see the great value of confession. Our blessed Lord forgives us all our sins, and we confess to Him."

"O, dear child, you don't understand yet. It is true that God pardons; but then He has appointed His priests to absolve, as His representatives, and He has made confession a special means of grace. It cannot be right to neglect any means He has appointed."

"No, if we are sure that He *has* appointed it."

"O, but we may be quite sure; the Church has used it in all ages,—and how can she be wrong? Indeed, dear, all the greatest saints have used confession, and the more they grow in saintliness, the more they value it; any one who does not feel the need of it, must be but little advanced in spiritual life, and no one can advance without it; both Mr. Gildcraft and Dr. Oldacre have always said so. Indeed, if we neglect the appointed means God has given us, how can we expect our souls to prosper?"

"But do people find comfort and blessing in the act of confession, or do they merely follow it because they think it right?"

"Obedience always brings a blessing," replied Sister Monica; "but, indeed, Maude, only those who have practised it can tell the comfort of it. Then those spiritual ties, too, are so wonderful! Our spiritual fathers in Christ are given such an insight into our souls; they know us much better than we know ourselves, and they can guide us far better than we can guide ourselves. And then they pray so much for us! I can give you an instance of it: Dr. Oldacre has a spiritual child, a widow lady, not in community, but a wonderful saint; she lives a very retired life, devotes her whole time and her large fortune to the poor, and is entirely under Dr. Oldacre's guidance. Well, do you know this lady always knows when he is praying

for her; he told me this himself. Ah, you do not know half the wonders that happen to really advanced saints!"

"Well, I suppose, if it is right, I shall see its necessity in time," sighed Maude. "Has Mr. Gildcraft many spiritual children?"

"Very many," replied Maude; "and latterly he has been very much engaged in organizing great schools. Both he and Dr. Oldacre think that everything depends on the next ten years, and especially on the education of the children. Mr. Gildcraft is introducing confession among the boys."

"But how do the parents like it?" asked Maude.

"O he manages wonderfully; really, he has such wisdom! But he says that John Bull is a hard customer sometimes; and a father will come to him and say, he does not understand all this; he hears confession is coming into fashion in the school, and he doesn't approve of any popish ways. Well, then, Mr. Gildcraft says to him, 'My dear sir, you don't understand; nothing is done that you could object to; but you would like your boys to make a friend of their master, would you not; like them to tell him anything that may be on their minds? Well that is just all we do; we encourage the dear boys to open their hearts to us, and you know the temptations to which lads are exposed, and how important it is that they should be on terms of confidence with their teachers,' —and so John Bull goes away satisfied."

Sister Monica proceeded, in the intervals of their visits to the poor to relate many marvellous stories, all tending to prove that confession and spiritual guidance were means especially appointed by God for His

children: and how these faithful confessors were giving their whole life to the cause of God's truth, working incessantly to bring back Catholic doctrine into the Church of England. It was in the course of this morning's walk that Maude became acquainted with the fact that the worship of the Virgin was a part of Sister Monica's creed, and that Mr. Gildcraft had given special devotions to the Virgin to her sister, though he had withheld them from *her*, not thinking her soul ready for them at that time.

"But," said Maude, "do you really think the blessed Virgin Mary can hear our prayers?"

"Of course I do," said Sister Monica, clasping her hands and looking up; "is she not the Mother of God, and does not the Lord Jesus love to answer her intercessions for us?"

Much conversation was held on this point, Maude taking refuge in the fact that the English Church did not teach it; and that even the Roman Catholic priests said that it was a doctrine to be taken on the authority of the Church, but not necessary for salvation.

The conversations of this day left a strong impression on Maude's mind. She was too much fascinated to perceive the jesuitical double-dealing of the conduct of Mr. Gildcraft; but she began to question whether her dislike to the idea of confession was not sinful; if it were true that the absolution of the priest was as the voice of God forgiving sin, was she not losing great comfort and peace? It ended in her telling Mother Angelica that she had made up her mind to confess, and she would choose Mr. Leigh. The next day she was sent into the parlour to see him. He began immediately to say how glad he was that she was at last

led to see and appreciate the value of confession. He was not surprised at the difficulty she felt in it; it was natural in one who had but lately been brought into communion with those who enjoyed such high spiritual advantages. He advised her giving him, by way of preparation, a short sketch of her past life, as it would make her confession easier. She did so; but before she had finished, he interrupted her by saying with a smile,

"You have told me of the places you have lived in, and the countries you have visited, but I do not see that this can help either of us with the history of the inner life."

Maude said she found it very difficult to speak of the inner life to him. Mr. Leigh replied by speaking at much length of the guidance God vouchsafes to give to His servants through the ministry, and the interview ended with a day being appointed for confession.

The hour came, and Maude was directed to join Mr. Leigh at St. Mark's Church. She met him at the door, and followed him to a small octagon room at the foot of the south-western tower of the church. This was used as his confessional; it contained a small table and two chairs. Mr. Leigh seated himself in one of these chairs, Maude knelt at the table beside him. He then dictated to her the following form of confession:—

"I confess to God the Father Almighty, His only begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and God the Holy Ghost, before the whole court of Heaven, and before thee, my spiritual father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my grievous fault." Then Mr. Leigh told her to confess all the sins she

could remember. He then rose, and pronounced the absolution and blessing, and took off the white surplice he had put on when they entered the room, and, after a little conversation on the "religious life," and the outer work of the sisterhood, they left the church. But not together; for Mr. Leigh told Maude that the common people could not accept the sacrament of confession at all, that it was with great difficulty that it would revive in the Church, and it was better that they should not be seen leaving the church together. Indeed, the next and only other time Maude confessed in St. Mark's, they were detained a considerable time in the tower, as Mr. Leigh had locked the church door, and some people, who had probably seen him go in with one of the sisterhood, were knocking loudly, and seemed determined not to go away.

After this second confession, many weeks later, Maude was more strongly impressed than ever with the conviction that there was no real benefit in the rite. To begin with, she could not confess to man as she did to God; and, with regard to spiritual guidance, in her short conversations with Mr. Leigh after confession, she felt he was incapable of satisfying her mind even on points of doctrine. He seemed to her to be less of an Anglican than Mother Angelica. Then, too, she was not satisfied as to the validity of the absolution, in case there was no apostolic succession, and the teaching of her Romish friends had made her uncertain on that point. At last, when bringing a message from Mr. Leigh to the Superior, complaining of the length of time since she had been at confession, she took courage to speak openly of her feelings, and said that she did not wish to confess again.

"My child, do you think of what you are saying?" said the Superior.

"Mother, I do not feel that I receive any real spiritual assistance from Mr. Leigh. Each time I have confessed I feel more certain that it is not profitable to my soul, and on points of doctrine Mr. Leigh is no help to me at all."

The Superior looked grave, even to sternness. "Maude," she said, "this is all pride, deep, intense, spiritual and intellectual pride and presumption which actuates you. It is one of the commonest and most dangerous developments of this pride in the religious life, to be dissatisfied with our spiritual guides. How can you presume to think that you know better, or can judge better than the spiritual father God has given you? Surely He must know best what your soul requires. You have done Mr. Leigh a grave injustice, and, under these circumstances, I certainly could not urge you to go to him again, for you are not in a state of mind to benefit by it. Your soul is not enlightened as to the blessings of spiritual guidance. You have shown as much want of charity as of humility and submission."

Maude was dismissed—perplexed, harassed, frightened at the state of spiritual pride, uncharitableness, and rebellion in which she supposed her soul must be, and, overwhelmed with a sense of spiritual darkness, she wrote a note to Mr. Leigh acknowledging the wrong feelings she had displayed towards him, and enclosed it to the Superior, with a note to herself, expressing much regret and sorrow for her conduct.

Soon after this she was sent to Mr. Leigh in the Oratory, and confessed again; but, as she was now a

good deal absent from Westonbury, and as on her admission later as a sister Mr. Leigh was also away, she had only one more opportunity of putting her spiritual submission to the test. She had cause in after years to be very thankful that she had chosen Mr. Leigh as her confessor, when she heard of the ordeal others of the community under other spiritual guides were subjected to. Mr. Leigh asked her no questions, and imposed no penances, except on one occasion he advised her to repeat one of the seven penitential psalms on her knees, and to make the sign of the cross with her tongue on the floor of the Oratory.

We cannot quit this subject of confession without a comment on its rapid increase and development in our English Church since the time of which we write.

Confession must be either a mere form, or be carried on in a way to involve evils of the most serious nature. The confessional and priestcraft have always proved themselves to be inseparable. Are we prepared to welcome them back after three centuries of Reformation, light, and apostolic truth? Of one thing we may be certain, that they will never regain ground where the Word of God is a household book, and where those who minister in the Church are not "Lords over Christ's heritage, but ensamples to the flock."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE RULES OF THE COMMUNITY.

MAUDE had been nearly six months at Westonbury, when the Superior unfolded to her a plan she had in view of founding a branch sisterhood at Portlyle, and said she wished that she could send her there, for she would be admirably suited for the work; but, she added, that she could not give it to any one not bound to her by the promise of obedience. Would there be any hope of gaining Lady Deerswood's consent to her entering the community? Maude replied, that she was sure, if her mother knew how happy she was in the "religious life," she would allow her to remain in it; but that it would be useless asking her now, as she was so utterly opposed to her views and wishes, and that most probably, if asked to consent to her becoming a sister, she would take alarm and recall her immediately.

After much conversation on the subject, Mother Angelica said that she would make her a "grey sister." "For which, Maude," added she, with a smile, "you need not ask your mother's consent, as it will not interfere with your duty to her."

As a "grey sister" she would take the promise of obedience to the Superior, with this mental reservation, that her first obedience would be due to her own

mother, but all her time, talent, and thought were to be given unreservedly to the community. She was to return to her mother when Lady Deerswood absolutely commanded it, but her return was to be in obedience to the Superior; her dress was to be held sacred, and her rules binding. When with her mother she was to hold herself in readiness to obey any injunction, or order, from the Mother Superior, to whom she was to write a daily account of all she said and did.

Mother Angelica then spoke of the advisability of her admission being kept a secret for the present, as she hardly liked to ask the sisters to receive one who had been so short a time a novice, but that her public admission should be some months later. In the mean time, she would be "Sister Maude" to the Superior, though only recognized as a novice in the community.

In preparation for this admission she was now very much with Mother Angelica. In the morning she lighted her fires, brought her breakfast, arranged her sitting room, took messages, wrote letters for her—all outer rule was at a stand still, as also the services. It sometimes struck Maude as strange, the entire liberty of the Superior as to all rule, and the arbitrary and heavy yoke imposed by her on the rest of the sisterhood. But then, was it not a sin to think that the Superior could err! And Maude had by this time quite fallen in with the current thought in the sisterhood, that the Mother Superior and her proceedings were far above all common ken, and not to be commented on or scrutinized by any of the community, especially by those so little advanced in the spiritual life as the novices.

So it was always a pleasure to be in attendance on her, and a satisfactory thought that making her fire, or sweeping her room, or bringing up her trays, or spending hours with her in comparative idleness, was an acceptable service to God, and a rare occasion of spiritual improvement. Added to this, Maude had an unbounded confidence in Mother Angelica, who invariably expressed a great affection for her, and treated her most kindly whenever she was with her.

The Superior was at this time occupied in copying out, on large parchment sheets, the "Rules of the Community," and she was also looking over plans for the building of the "Abbey," the foundation-stone of which had been laid some months previously. These plans she showed and explained to Maude. They were on a magnificent scale; the chapel, the cloisters, the nuns' cells, the superior's apartments, the stone staircases, the enclosed gardens, all were to be in keeping, and this was intended to be the "Mother House" of hundreds of branch sisterhoods, which the foundress hoped would spread all over the world. They were now to be planted in triangles over England, and "Little Portlyle" was to be one of the first in these triangles, and to be begun on a self-supporting system, the sisters commencing as poor women selling work for their living.

The rules of the society were now given to Maude to read and to copy in her manuscript book, and for some days she spent hours in a little oratory communicating with the Superior's sitting room, studying these rules, and had long conversations with the Superior. Mother Angelica dwelt much on the

sublime dignity of the unmarried life, of the high place it held in Heaven, of the great graces which were vouchsafed to those who chose this better part of the high perfection to which the "religious" could attain, and that, though marriage was right and honourable, yet celibacy was angelic. Obedience, poverty, chastity, were the foundation-stones of the life that she was now to enter, and that she could not prize too highly the blessed vocation which God had given her.

Mother Angelica had told Maude that this rule of "Holy Obedience" was the one she wished her most deeply to study, and to ask God to give her power to understand. She assured her that it was the one great corner-stone of the religious life—that when she had learned obedience she would be all that she could wish. Maude had said that she could obey *her*, Mother Angelica, because she had faith in her, but that if Sister Ursula, for instance, was the Superior, she could not obey her implicitly, for she would constantly be doubting her judgment. The Mother replied, that belief in the principle of Holy Obedience was a gift of God, but that if her "precious child" went on in diligent practice of obedience, faith in the principle would be given her from above.

Maude prayed earnestly that she might have this wonderful gift of faith in the principle of Holy Obedience. Surely, she thought, she must be very unenlightened not to be able to enter into the spiritual depth of this rule, which seemed to her so full of the lowliest Christian humility, and so scriptural in its wording and sentiment. And then, did it not embody just the truth she was seeking? did not her soul long to throw its responsibility on another, to have nothing

to do but to obey? If only she could be implicitly obedient, how free from all care, how restful, how peaceful, would be her every step through life! no responsibility, no burden of thought as to what was true, what was right! Yes, there must be some deep hidden virtue in this obedience, some inner light conveyed through its practice! Did not the Rule say that the gift of the Holy Spirit came through the exercise of this lowly and entire submission?

In the dim religious light of that little Oratory, at the foot of the wooden cross, with the parchment manuscript spread out before her, Maude remained for hours in meditation and prayer, striving to tutor her soul into the reception of this holy obedience, praying with an earnest longing desire for faith to believe—this lie!—drinking in unconsciously deep draughts of that mystic spirit of asceticism which in all ages has intoxicated and deluded its votaries!

We will here pause in our narrative to examine briefly these rules, which were henceforth to bind her.

### On your Rule of Holy Obedience.

Ye who have offered up to God your judgment and your will must strive to preserve and grow in the submission ye have professed. Actions in themselves indifferent become sanctified when done in the spirit of holy obedience, for all authority descends from God; and *Superiors bear the image of the divine power of God, which He vouchsafes to imprint upon them;* and He will surely require it at your hands if ye despise His authority in them. *For the powers that be are ordained of God.*

Ye shall ever address the spiritual mother with honour and respect, avoid speaking of her among yourselves

cherish and obey her with holy love, without any murmur or sign of hesitation or repugnance, but simply, cordially, and promptly. Obey with cheerfulness, *and banish from your mind any question as to the wisdom of the command given you.* If ye fail in this, ye have *failed to resist a temptation of the evil one.*

Ye shall never discuss with any person (except by express direction of the spiritual mother), either within the Society or without it, the Rules of the Order, or the commands of the Superior. Ye shall diligently avoid making any comment upon either, and ye shall make it a subject of immediate confession to your Superior if ye have, unhappily, been betrayed into this error, and ye shall receive a penance, but no word of admonition or reproof for the same.

The Rule of your Order implies an exact obedience to the directions of the Superior, and to the spirit and letter of the Rule.

There are some who wish to attain perfection, but imagine it is to be reached through the discipline they would desire for themselves, and not that which is appointed for them. Hence if they are sent to the door, or have distracting occupations, or if they are burdened with work, or if they are withdrawn from it, they become impatient, and think such discipline is hard to endure, and an occasion of sin to them. Ye shall learn, through daily and constant observation and practice, *that through the exercise of lowly and entire obedience ye will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.* One who is obedient will obey readily serving God. She seeks for no reason, asks not the end of the command, but tranquilly and in peace applies her ears to hear every precept, and her hands and feet instantly to fulfil it.

When the sisters think that from sickness or some other cause there is just reason why they should ask to be excused from certain rules or directions, they shall always take care to represent this once to the Superior, but if, after such re-

presentation, she does not reply, they shall obey, trusting that, notwithstanding their repugnance, and the supposed impossibility, God will enable them to accomplish it.

Ye shall submit, in like manner, to the sisters commissioned by the Mother in anything which concerns the execution of obedience, neither opposing nor troubling them in the fulfilment of their office.

If any sister fails in obedience, or resists with contumacy or rebellion, *she shall be punished according to discretion.*

Finally, ye shall remember that to testify your entire love, and faithfulness, and submission to your dear Lord, ye must obey, not so much from fear of sin as from a desire to please Him. Ye shall, therefore, submit with the same cheerfulness to small and to great things. Ye shall undertake no work, nor dispense with the smallest observance, without permission. Be ye well persuaded that on *negligence or exactitude in obedience* depends the preservation of discipline, the purity of the Society, *and the progress of each soul in the Way of Life.*

Meditate each night on the holy obedience of the childhood of our Lord Jesus, and each night offer up, as a little child, to Him the silent obedience which, in memory of His example, ye have desired to fulfil.

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," saith the Lord.

We who read this Rule, not in the dim religious light of Mother Angelica's Oratory, nor in the still dimmer mental shades of conventual asceticism, naturally ask, who is the object of all this lowly and devoted submission? Man or God? *Not* God, but the Mother Superior of the Sisterhood. It is to *her* that unquestioning obedience is described as due; it is the rules given by *her* which are never to be dis-

puted, never evaded, never even discussed with others; it is *her* commands which the sisters must believe they will be enabled to obey to the letter, even though sickness or other cause should seem to make it impossible.

If these words were applied to God instead of the Mother Superior, a better definition of true Christian faith in, and obedience to, our Lord and Master, could hardly be given.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."—*St. John* xiv. 15.

"Thou shalt not add nor minish ought into them."

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass."

"Who art thou that repliest against God?"

All these and many other words of Scripture enjoin precisely the obedience and homage to our Creator and Redeemer, which the rule of Holy Obedience enjoins to the Mother Superior.

Plainly, this whole Rule of Obedience is simply the *counterfeit* of that entire self-consecration which the Christian whose soul has been redeemed owes to his Redeemer. To Him, indeed, and to His holy will revealed in the Scriptures, the Christian owes an unhesitating, unquestioning, obedience. If His providential dealings appear mysterious, childlike trust and entire confidence and submission are due from those who know that the Judge of all the earth "must needs do right," though His ways are past finding out.

If in God's service, in the keeping of His plain Commandments, we are led into difficulties in which

flesh and heart fail, we are not to doubt that He can sustain us, even in the very furnace.

If He withdraws an active servant from work, and lays him aside by sickness, or leads him by His providence to uncongenial occupations, it is the Christian's part to follow in the thorniest path, or submit to be altogether laid by, in cheerful resignation and confidence that "He doeth all things well."

But this Rule of Holy Obedience is in fact a part of that corrupt and perverted Christianity which, since its first manifestation in the Church, has beguiled ignorantly devout souls—a system which, indeed, "admits the whole canon of truth, and yet contrives that it should teach only error."

The next rule was—

### Of Holy Poverty.

The true and solid heritage of the religious life has always been Holy Poverty. Strive to be faithful to poverty in little as well as in great things; ye must remember that it is not enough for the spirit of poverty, described in the Holy Gospels, to have renounced outwardly the claim and possession of the goods of the world, but that it is necessary that your hearts and minds should be disengaged from them.

All the buildings shall be of a religious character, and all the furniture and articles in public and private use shall be agreeable to the spirit of poverty and simplicity. It is not permitted to any sister *to appropriate anything however small, or under whatever pretext, to herself*, since each shall, on the day of her entrance, renounce in favour of the community not only the possession but the use and disposition of everything which is hers, or shall be given to her,—*all this being under the entire regulation of the Superior.*

Ye shall neither ask for nor receive anything without

permission, and when ye shall have received it ye shall place it in the hands of the Mother Assistant for the use of the Society.

Ye shall remember that always to have what ye require is not wearing the cross nor the seal of humble and entire devotion to Him, who for us bore poverty, hunger, thirst, homelessness, and all the sufferings of His most holy life.

Here, again, we see the caricature, so to speak, of the true Christian's readiness, if need be, to give up all for his Lord's sake. The Christian, if rich, knows that he is a steward for Christ, but in this rule of "Holy Poverty" we see this scriptural principle turned aside and applied to man; and it is almost needless to observe how mighty a power is given thereby to the Superior.

The sister is virtually bound to her by necessity; should she desire to leave the sisterhood she may positively be without the means of doing so; she may be compelled to stay by the fear of being thrown friendless and penniless on the world. The Christian knows that his every talent is a gift bestowed on him by God, to be used in His service, to whom alone he is responsible, whether he bury it in a napkin, or by cultivation turn the one talent into ten; but in the rule we have just read, this blessed truth of the dedication of the believer and of all that he has to God, is turned, by a subtle delusion, from its rightful channel of devotion to Christ, into the giving up all private judgment and individual responsibility, and submitting to the arbitrary will of a sinful fallible mortal.

### Of Humility.

To be clothed with humility is most meet and needful for those who have dedicated themselves to God the Most High

and Holy One, who dwelleth with the lowly and contrite. Ye must, therefore, be careful especially to exercise the grace of meekness in bearing affronts, for one living in community, who is unwilling to do so, cannot advance in the way of holiness. If you desire to learn perfect humility, accept in peace all the hard treatment which you receive. This can be borne easily by those who know themselves sufficiently well to know that they deserve humiliations for the punishment of their sins, and for their correction. You will gain more in the love of God by meekly receiving an affront, or a discipline *which you do not understand, than by fasting ten days on bread and water.*

It will sometimes happen that a privilege which is refused to you is conceded to another; that what you say is treated with contempt, while the words of another are heard with attention; that while the actions of others are the theme of general praise, and they are elected to offices of honour, you are passed by unnoticed, or perhaps your conduct is made the subject of derision. If you accept in peace all these humiliations, and if, with earnest attention, you commend to God those from whom you receive the least consideration, you will have made some steps in the way of deep humility. Try to consider yourself especially indebted to such, since they are messengers of God to you, teaching you to follow the humility of Jesus, to love to be concealed and little esteemed, to be content to lack all praise of men, so that you may be nearer to God.

Remember that the deepest humility is but a speaking truth, and that all pride is a lie before God.

Be very careful never to excuse yourself for any oversight or indiscretion of which you have been guilty, but patiently receive blame. If you wish to explain yourself, ask if you are permitted to speak, *and if permission is not granted, receive the humiliation with gratitude and entire confidence in the judgment and love of the Superior.*

Be sure never to praise yourself, or to speak or do anything tending directly to self-exaltation, but be not troubled if, in doing right, you receive praise of man. Receive it, and give it back to God with instant thanks to Him if He has in any way used you to His glory, and then wait with patience for the humiliation which will follow. Say to Him, "Praised be Thy Name, not mine; let Thy Holy Name be exalted for ever, but to me let no part of men's praise be given."

In all your thoughts and words on the truth of God and the mysteries of His Church, strive to keep your intellect and spirit subdued, and tremble before Him, remembering that we are very babes in His sight, and that it is only by the teaching of His Spirit that we can know anything of His truth.

If you are tempted to any thought of pride or self-complacency, call to mind the sins of your life, and, taking refuge with our Lord, say fervently to Him: "Ah, Lord Jesu! give me, a sinner, of Thy humility!" Voluntary humiliations, such as to serve the sick, to kiss the feet of those who imagine, even unjustly, that ye have offended, and similar acts of humility, are very profitable, but to embrace with cheerfulness, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, the humiliations which come from others, is still more so. As gold is tried in the fire, so is man's perfection proved by humiliations.

Finally, ye must ever remember that pride shuts out the soul from God, and hinders the acceptance of her prayers, but humility pierceth the clouds, and will not depart till the Most High shall regard. He hath said He will resist the proud, and give grace unto the humble! Ye shall have great peace if ye seek earnestly the high grace of true humility, ye shall be fashioned in the likeness of your Lord in this present life, and shine gloriously in His presence in that which is to come.

### On Purity.

*Sublime is the dignity of Virgins.* Each may say, *My Beloved is mine and I am His.* Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Neither life nor death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Ye would be unworthy of this high blessedness if ye did not seek to preserve this angelic virtue as a mirror without spot.

Ye must watch carefully over your senses. Ye shall not ask to receive useless letters or interviews. Ye shall read the Holy Scriptures with diligence. Every day ye shall use the Psalter with as earnest devotion as ye can, and pray every day to God to increase in you this devotion. Ye shall use no other book than the Holy Scriptures, the *Breviary according to the use of Sarum*, provided for the use of this Society in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one; the Book of Common Prayer; the Imitation of the Life of Christ; the Devotions of Bishop Andrews; the editions being such as are approved of by the spiritual mother, the Superior of Westonbury. Ye shall also possess a manuscript book for meditation, with the Rule of the Order written therein. Ye shall not read any other words except by the express direction of the Superior, and she shall be very careful that she suffer not this rule to become corrupt through innovation.

Ye must avoid all irregularities in eating or drinking, and practise temperance and sobriety. Ye must not eat out of the refectory without direction. Ye must observe the fasts of the Church in the manner prescribed by obedience.

Ye shall eat indifferently whatever is put before you, without showing any dislike, remembering that one devoted to our Lord should take greater care to mortify the body than to satisfy it. Ye shall never take food except as

directly from the hand of God, giving Him humble thanks for this His mercy, and seeking to consecrate to Him the strength He has thus refreshed.

Ye shall love to speak little. *Ye shall not speak to any one out of the Society, except with the permission of the Superior.* Ye shall at such times endeavour to converse with wisdom and modesty. Let your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Should it happen that the bell for the Services rings while ye are in the parlour, ye shall courteously ask permission to attend to it.

It is not permitted to any sister to go to the door without express leave from the Superior; neither is she to give messages or commissions, or receive letters, or send replies, without *direction or permission.* In all these and similar things ye shall apply to the Superior (or by her direction to the Mother Assistant at *Westonbury*, but this shall not be elsewhere done except by express direction of the Superior of Westonbury and Portlyle, who shall take care that such direction be only temporary, and furthermore that it be not given without grave and sufficient cause).

Ye shall write short and simple letters, and ye shall *show them to the Superior*, who shall take care that they receive the *seal of the Society* before they go forth.

Ye shall value labour, going to your duties at the time appointed in the arrangement of the day: the work shall be distributed among the sisters according to the order of the Superior. Ye shall take care, during such times of the day as are at your own disposal, to keep yourselves so occupied that ye may give no place to any temptation by your idleness. *Ye shall write daily the account of your rule to the Superior*, and receive your instructions with thoughtful attention.

No one can read this Rule without at once perceiving the marks of the apostacy spoken of by St. Paul,

which, under the guise of superior sanctity, would overthrow God's ordinance for the well-being and happiness of mankind, esteeming itself wiser than the Creator, by changing His institutions (see the Epistles to Timothy), and thus introducing a system of so-called "religious life," subversive of every human relationship, and tending by its working to destroy every domestic and social tie.

### Of Holy Communion.

Beloved, in Holy Communion ye are incorporated into the mystical body of Christ; but death is not as yet swallowed up in victory, for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Take ye good heed to watch against temptation. Ye shall learn the depths of temptation in the depths of the spiritual life. Peter said unto Him, I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. Yet saith He, Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in me. Likewise the Apostle also biddeth us take heed that we be not as the Jews, who did all eat the same spiritual meat and drank of that same spiritual Rock that followed them, and they were overthrown in the wilderness; for the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play; wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Yet likewise saith He: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Wherefore, my dearly beloved, rise ye not up from this heavenly banquet to play, but to watch. Flee from idolatry; neither tempt

ye Christ; neither commit fornication against Him; neither murmur ye as some have murmured, and have been destroyed by the destroyer.

Take diligent heed to the exhortations of the Lord Jesus after He had instituted the Holy Supper. He exhorted them to humility, charity, and obedience, giving us His divine examples, and a new commandment to bind these precepts on our hearts; and he enforced the latter yet more urgently, for He saith, "If ye love me keep my commandments; if a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

*Ye shall prepare for Holy Communion by the diligent attention to your Rule*, and to *all the precepts* it enjoins; and ye shall earnestly and without fear seek to communicate as *often as Obedience will allow.*

"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of my companions?"

Ye shall retire to the Oratory immediately after Holy Communion, there to commune with the Lord Jesus. Ye shall offer yourselves wholly to His love. Ye shall say with joy, "This is my Beloved, and this is my friend. O daughters of Jerusalem, I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me. Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm."

Ye shall here pause to dwell in His love in silence. Ye shall rise to go forth to work with your Lord, to bear your appointed share in the labours of the Society for the souls of others, saying, "Come, my Beloved, let us go into the field, let us lodge in the villages, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth."

Ye shall again consecrate yourselves to His will in your

*Rule of Holy Obedience*, saying, "O that thou wert as my brother; I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me."

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken unto Thy voice. Cause me to hear it."

### On Awaking.

These are the first fruits of the day, which should be wholly consecrated to Christ.

On hearing the salutation, "Laus Deo," respond, Amen. Rise immediately, and quickly *make the sign of the cross*, and offer yourselves, your Society, and your Superior to the Holy Trinity.

While dressing, take care that your thoughts are strictly employed as your Rule directs. Pray the Lord Jesus that He will clothe you with the marriage garments, and as ye *robe yourselves in the garments of mourning and penitence, which ye wear on earth*, think of the hour when, the days of mourning ended, ye shall behold your Heavenly Bridegroom, and be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. It would be well to look forward throughout the day, to foresee the occasions on which you will be likely to suffer most, in order to offer them to the Lord, with a resolution to bear yourselves well through them, as also to combat the fault ye have specially to destroy, or to exercise the virtue ye are taught must be acquired.

Then ye shall say "Our Father," on your knees, and with the deepest attention ye can command, dwelling on one or more of the seven petitions which compose it.

As ye leave your rooms to go forth to the labours, and duties, and struggles of the day, let these words be on your lips: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

### On Examination of Conscience.

Ye shall make two general examinations during the day, placing yourselves in the presence of God, as at His judgment-seat, in order to listen to the accusing voice of conscience, and to cleanse the soul from her defilement.

Call to mind the actions of the day, and examine whether you can discover *any defect in your obedience to your Rule*, such as sloth in rising in the morning, delay in obeying the calls of the bell, impatience, vanity in wishing to be noticed by others, observations of any kind on Superiors, words of disrespect to or of each other, idle or uncharitable words, words of self-exaltation, words of detraction, words of duplicity, words of excuse, intemperance in eating, or talking, or laughing, careless distractions during vocal or mental prayer or meditation, looks of curiosity, loss of time, selfishness, disorder, want of attention to work, want of order and regularity in your way of performing it, want of energy in doing it perfectly, want of attention to directions, &c., &c. Woe to her who is not afraid of light faults : she is in danger of falling into grievous transgressions.

Ask of God to enlighten your conscience and to quicken your soul.

Ask of Him courage to look at your faults, and sins, and infirmities as they are, to confess them to Him, and to forsake them at whatever cost. If your soul is dark or desponding, regard it as one of the most dangerous temptations of Satan. Beg of God to root out all pride from your heart, and immediately use acts of devotion to the Holy Trinity, which ye shall ask for from your Superior, who will also direct you to make an act of humiliation.

But if ye only feel grief and distress for your faults, be comforted : these are good signs. Close your examination with an act of sorrow and love to Him whose blood

cleanseth from all sin; *and be careful that ye make known to your Superior the slightest transgression of the external Rule; all that concerns the practice of Obedience, the words of your lips, or any defect in outward behaviour, of which you are conscious.*

Ye shall make a particular examination of conscience once every three hours, unless otherwise directed for a time by your Superior, who should take care that the practice be not remitted or altered without urgent cause.

This special examination shall be *first on the Rule* read for the day, secondly on the fault which ye are especially directed to destroy. It may be short, as a glance only is necessary at the occasions in which ye have failed in these particular points, which ye shall number.

Take care to observe, first, whether your thoughts are collected and devout in prayer, and attentive and energetic in work; secondly, whether ye are doing all things with a pious intention to please God; thirdly, whether ye have been guilty of thoughts of self, or dwelling upon self-advancement in spiritual or in lesser things; fourthly, whether ye have disobeyed our Lord's precept: Take no thought for the morrow.

If ye find ye have transgressed, ye shall proceed shortly to correct yourselves on these four points by the following methods:—

First, ye shall make a steadfast resolution of diligent amendment; secondly, ye shall say to your soul, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Thirdly, offer up an act of adoration to the Holy Trinity (for which ye shall ask direction), lying at the foot of the cross; fourthly, ye shall say, directly ye are conscious of the before-mentioned thoughts, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and reflect that such anticipations, even in little things, are most carefully to be shunned, as proceeding from

an undisciplined, restless spirit, and as being enemies to the repose of the soul.

Close this examination by a short act of sorrow, and desire for forgiveness, and the love of God.

Ye shall also make an act of special examination every Thursday, *in preparation for the Chapter*, in which ye shall diligently mark how ye have transgressed against your Rule, especially in such matters as the following:—

*The desire for relaxation of Rule; breaking silence;* the way in which ye have received reproof, either from your superior, your sisters, or your inferiors; the careless words ye may have spoken; the unprofitable words, the uncharitable words.

Ye shall also take diligent heed to confess any words spoken with a secret desire for self-exaltation.

Ye shall not fail to ask, every month, for a day's retreat; but ye shall rest content if, for the service of the Society, for your own benefit, or any other reason, it is denied you.

The retreat shall be spent in silence, meditation, prayer, self-examination, and such other exercises as may be enjoined.

Here endeth the Internal Rule of the Sisters of this Society.

We laud and magnify Thee, Unbegotten Father; Thee, only Begotten Son; Thee, Holy Spirit; the Holy and undivided Trinity; and we confess Thee with our hearts and lips. Glory be to Thee, world without end. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

We commend these "Rules" to the careful study of those of our readers who imagine Anglican sisterhoods to be free from all the evils of the Roman Catholic conventual system.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PRAYER AND PRAISE AT WESTONBURY.

*THE Psalter of David, according to the use of the Church of Salisbury*, was translated from the Latin in the Sisterhood, printed for private circulation, and bound by one of the sisters in black leather covers. These books had two silver clasps, and contained, in addition to the Psalter, blank manuscript leaves, on which each sister was to write the Rules, the particular Service for her Order, the Admission Service, the Chapter Service, and the *Breviary* (*of which the Psalter was only a part*), when it was translated, as it was not Mother Angelica's intention to have it printed publicly.

These books were much valued; each sister had her own; and the Superior gave many little pictures to her children to ornament their manuscript writings.

The *Psalter* contained the Canonical Hours; Matins; and Lauds and Vespers had distinct services for each day of the week: for Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, the service was each day alike.

In Nones, are *prayers for the dead.* Then shall be said this Psalm for all the faithful departed: "De Profundis." After which—

*V.* Give unto them, O Lord, eternal rest.
*R.* And let Thy perpetual light shine upon them.
*V.* From the gates of hell,
*R.* Deliver, O Lord, their souls.

Let us pray. Absolve, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the souls of Thy children, *Thy chief priests*, Thy priests, our parents, our benefactors, and all the *faithful departed*, from all the bands of their sins, that in the resurrection they may inherit everlasting glory with Thy saints and Thy elect, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*V.* May they rest in peace.

*R.* Amen.

In the Compline Service, again, there is a prayer:—"May the souls of the departed rest in peace;" and reference is made to the keeping of the "Octave of Corpus Christi," of the day of the "Visitation," and the "Nativity of the Blessed Virgin."

*The Daily Offices of the Order of the Holy Ghost, according to the use of Westonbury,—*

Consists of a Hymn, a Meditation, a Litany to the Holy Ghost, a Collect, and an Ejaculation. The litany and the collect are the same for each day; the meditations are different.

COLLECT TO BE USED DAILY.

O Lord our God! sorrow has filled our hearts, and our souls are filled with grief and sadness at seeing Thy bitter sufferings. We beseech Thee to pardon all the insults, contempts, outrages, which were offered Thee during Thy mortal life; *forgive the irreverences committed against Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love;* above all, forgive the sorrows we have caused Thy divine Heart by our numberless sins, *by want of reverence in Thy Holy Places*, by our cold and negligent communions, and abusing Thy grace. Alas! our repentance and adoration cannot now give Thee the glory of which our sins have deprived Thee. Would that our words and example might bring back the hearts that wander from Thee, or that our tears and prayers could put an end

to their scandals. Remember that we are Thy creatures, and give us grace to know our Creator, that we may love Him. Show Thy mercy, by causing our hearts to regain, through ardent love, the time they have lost in not loving Thee. O God, how canst Thou make us know what Thou art, better than by granting us Thy grace? Let Thy vengeance be that of a God of mercy. Convert us, and forgive us. Forgive our coldness and want of zeal to make Thee known and loved.

We beseech this mercy, also, for all those in whom we are interested, especially for this Society, the Right Reverend the Bishop, our Reverend Mother, the three Orders of this Society, the Mother Assistants, our Right Reverend Bishop Philip of Westshire, the individual members of this Society *living or departed, our Foundress. Extend this Society, O Lord, into all places and ages.* Let it honour Thee by the practice of every virtue, and by a fervent zeal for the conversion of souls.

Behold, O Lord! the progress Thy enemies are daily making; and since they will not come to Thee, go to them, O God! we beseech Thee.

Good Shepherd, we implore it through Thy Sacred Wounds!

Heart of Jesus! Thou art an inexhaustible fountain of mercy for sinners!

Our evils are great. We beseech Thee to increase the number of Thy children, to grant them peace, and enable them to bless Thy Holy Name for ever, that we may possess Thee, and be united to Thee for ever.

HYMN FOR THIRD DAY.

Come, sweet harp resounding
Teian strains of yore,
With soft airs abounding
Round the Lesbian shore—
Doric shell awakes thy soft themes no more.

Talk no more of maiden
Fair with beauty's wiles,
Youth with blessings laden,
Whom new life beguiles,
Smiling as it flies, flying as it smiles.

Wisdom, which ne'er wrongeth,
Born of God above,
Toils in birth, and longeth
Your sweet chords to prove,
And has bid me flee woes of earthly love.

What is strength, or glory,
Beauty, gold, or fame,
What renown in story,
Or a mighty name,
To the thoughts of God, cares which bring not blame?

One o'er steeds is bending.
One his bow has strung,
One his gold is tending,
One by youth is sung,
With bright looks and locks o'er his shoulders flung.

Mine be the low portal
Paths in silence trod,
Knowing not things mortal,
Knowing things of God,
While still at my side Wisdom holds her rod.

Wisdom, youth adorning,
Wisdom, cheering age
Wisdom, wealth's best warning,
Want's best heritage—
Poverty herself shall with smiles engage.

May there but be given
Such, though scanty store,
That I be not driven
To my neighbour's door,
Nor to kankering cares, rich enough though poor.

Grasshopper that singest
In the morning dew,
Thoughts to me thou bringest
Which my soul renew—
Hark! unearthly sounds all around me flew!

What in me is breeding
Some melodious themes?
O Thou, thought exceeding,
From whom blessing streams,
Throned o'er highest height, Father, King Supreme!

Sitting in Thy glory,
On Thy firm-based Throne,
With all worlds before Thee,
One of Ones alone—
Singleness Triunio, Mystic Union!

From that Oneness flowing
Threefold Power has sprung,
O'er all things bestowing
Beauty ever young—
From the centre flowing, round the centre hung.

Hush, my heart, thou singest
Things that are too high,
To rude ears thou bringest
Secrets of the sky—
Pass the things of God, in dread silence by.

Mark how life, thence flowing,
Forms and shapes immure,
While through all things going,
Wends the Spirit pure—
Small, but of a seed mighty to endure.

Into worlds descending
With a ruling soul,
With etherial tensling
It doth move the whole,
And the living ball of the heavens unroll.

Ever without slumber
Through celestial land,
In forms without number,
It is still at hand,
And with power fills the angelic band.

Thence with chain descending,
Lets itself to earth,
And in flesh enshrining,
Here below hath birth,
In oblivion strange of its heavenly birth.

Through its fleshly portal
With care-blinded eyes,
Looks the young Immortal,
With a glad surprise,
Pent in prison bars, 'neath its parent skies.

Yet faint flashes brighten
Eyeballs closed to sense;
There are gleams that lighten
This our earthly fence,
And a heaven-born strength which may bear us hence.

Happy he that fleeth
Hell devouring wide,
Who his pathway seeth
Through the stormy tide,
And to God returns, casting earth aside.

Happy he when sadness,
Chance and pains are o'er,
And earth's sighing gladness
Wrings the heart no more,
Who shall see where God lights the eternal shore.

Hard with calm dominion
The whole heart to move,
And with steadfast pinion
Wing the heights above—
Strengthen Thou our wings with unfailing love.

Father, o'er us bending,
Stretch Thou forth Thy hand,
Rays from Thee descending
Lighten our dark road—
Opening paths that lead to Thy fair abode.

Wells with good thence flowing,
Drink, my soul, nor grieve,
To Thy Father going,
Rise, delay not, leave
Earthy things to earth, God shall thee receive.

### Meditation for Third Day.

St. James says that patience is the perfect work of the soul. Patience hath a perfect work (*St. James* i, 4). It is by *patience that we are to obtain heaven. This world is the*

*place of merit;* hence it is not a place of repose, but of labour and sufferings; for this *end hath God given us life,* that *by patience we may obtain the glory of heaven.*

All persons in this world must have sufferings. He who suffers with patience, suffers less, and is saved; but he who suffers with impatience, suffers more, and is lost. Our Lord does not send us crosses that we may be lost, as the impatient would tell us, but that we may be saved, and become more glorious in heaven. Sorrows, adversities, and all other tribulations, received with patience, become the most beautiful jewels of our crown in paradise.

When, therefore, we are in tribulation, let us take comfort, and thank God for them, because it is a sign that God desires to save us in this life, in which chastisements are light and short, instead of chastising us in the next, in which chastisements are grievous and eternal. Unhappy the sinner who is prosperous in this life: it is a sign that God reserves for him an eternal chastisement. St. Mary Magdalen, of Passi, says: "Pain, however great, becomes palatable, when we look upon Jesus Christ on the cross."

St. Joseph Calasanctius adds: "He gains not Jesus Christ who suffers not for Jesus Christ." He, therefore, who loves Jesus Christ, supports with patience all exterior crosses, infirmities, pains, poverty, dishonour, loss of parents and friends, and all interior crosses, anguish, weariness, temptations, and desolation of spirit, and suffers all patiently.

The Ejaculation for the Third Day is—

My Beloved is Crucified!

We will give a few extracts from the Meditations of the rest of the week:—

O day of happiness, eternal day! Adorable Saviour of unceasing love, we hope for this happiness through Thee. To Thee we shall owe it; in Thee and with Thee we shall enjoy it. In this hope and expectation what *ought*

*we not to do, what ought we not to suffer to make ourselves worthy of it?* Ought we to refuse to walk in Thy steps, to imitate Thy example, to embrace Thy cross, in short, to die to ourselves and all things, that we may live eternally with and in Thee?

With fear and trembling, saith the Apostle, work out your salvation (*Phil.* ii, 12). In order to be saved, we should tremble lest we be lost, for there is no medium: we must be either saved or lost for ever. He who trembles not is in great danger of being lost, because he takes but little care to employ the means of obtaining salvation. God desires that all should be saved, and He gives to all His grace; but He requires that all should co-operate for this end. All desire to be saved; many, because they will not employ the means of salvation, are lost. St. Philip Neri used to say, Heaven is not made for the slothful. Enlighten me, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to do, and what I ought to avoid; for I desire to do all that Thou requirest of me. I am determined, by Thy grace, to save my soul!

One soul! my daughters, one eternity!—which saying means, that in this world we ought not to attend to anything but to the salvation of our souls, because if the soul be lost all will be lost, and, if once lost, will be lost for ever.

Benedict the XII being asked by a Prince for a favour he could not grant without sin, answered the ambassador: "Tell your Prince, that if I had two souls, I would give him one, but as I have only one, I cannot consent to lose it for his sake." Thus should we answer the devil, or the world, when they offer us forbidden fruit. . . . . Would that we were fully impressed with the meaning of that great maxim: "There is but one evil, and one only good in the world. The evil is damnation; the only good, salvation."

No; poverty, infirmity, ignominies, are not evils; these, when embraced with resignation, will increase our glory in heaven. On the other hand, wealth, riches, and honours are not goods for too many Christians, because they become to them greater occasions of losing their souls . . . . Hence the Church instructs us to pray: "May the Holy Ghost, we beseech Thee, O Lord, inflame us with that fire which our Lord Jesus Christ came to cast upon the earth, and which He ardently desired should be enkindled." . . . . . Thus doth the Holy Church teach us to pray: "May the infusion of the Holy Ghost cleanse our hearts, and may the aversion of His dew fertilize them."

This Daily Office of the Holy Ghost was in *addition* to the Seven Canonical Hour Services and the Morning and Evening Prayers in church.

There was also a *Service of Praise*, to be said on Sundays.

The *Chapter Service* began with an hymn, "Veni Creator Spiritus," and was followed by the address of the Mother to the sisters ranged on a bench before her. After this the Collect and Confession from the Communion Service; then the sisters' confessions to the Mother, followed by a number of Antiphons and Versicles; each Antiphon is said singly before the Versicle, and repeated by all after it.

*Ant.* After that the Lord had risen from supper with His disciples, He poured water into a bason, and began to wash His disciples' feet: this example he left them.

*Ant.* The Lord Jesus, after he had supped with His disciples, washed their feet and said to them, Know ye what I have done to you, I your Lord and Master? I have given you an example that ye also should do so.

*Ver.* Lord, Thou art become gracious to Thy land; Thou hast turned away the captivity of Jacob.

*Ant.* Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, If I wash thee not thou wilt have no part with me.

*Ver.* What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.

*Ant.* As before.

*Ver.* If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, how much more ought ye to wash one another's feet?

*Ant.* As before.

*Ver.* O hear ye this all ye people, ponder it with your ears all ye that dwell in the world!

After sundry more Antiphons and Versicles, the Mother washes the feet; when, after the Lord's Prayer and a Collect, the ceremony ends.

At this Chapter Service the sisters confess according to the Rule given on "Examination of Conscience." The Superior is exempt from such confession, and takes her place with regard to the community, as in imitation of Christ's place in the midst of his disciples.

We must now hasten to resume our narrative, only dwelling briefly on the fact that late one night Maude was taken by the Mother Superior into the Oratory, and there bound secretly to the community as a Grey Sister; her public admission was some two months later.

The Superior knelt by the altar, and read some prayers from the Admission Service; then rising, she dictated the following promise, which Maude, still kneeling, repeated after her:—"MY MOTHER, I PROMISE TO OBEY YOU IN ALL THINGS, AS MY RULE DOTH DIRECT."

## CHAPTER VII.

### WORK AT PORTLYLE.

ONE day, not long after her private admission, "Sister" Maude was called to the Superior, who told her that she was to go a long journey with her and Sister Ursula to the great old town of Portlyle and look for a house. They were to go *incog.*, and must dress in such "Babylonish garments" as they could find in the Poor's Wardrobe, "and make your hair very smooth, Maude; I wish it were not so short," added the Mother with a smile, "as I want to take you with me to The Cedars, where I must pay a visit."

It was not very easy for Maude to make her hair smooth, as her great object had been to have it short enough to be able to wash it continually, and to avoid the probability of its rivalling Sister Anna's in point of unwelcome intruders.

No mirrors being in the sisterhood, it was left to Sister Ursula to make her look like a tidy nursery-maid in the "Babylonish," or secular, garments.

Arrived at Portlyle, they were met by Mr. Wilson, an architect, who had been looking out for houses for them. Several were seen; at last a little old house in a court, at the entrance to which was a public-house, was chosen, as it was in the vicinity of a very

poor neighbourhood, and St. Saviour's Church was close by. Mr. Wilson kindly undertook to settle with the landlord, and to take it for "some poor but respectable women;" the rent was £12 a-year, and it was to be put into repair, which indeed it needed: for the little diamond-shaped panes of glass were shaking out of the old leaden frames, the tiny corkscrew staircase was in a dilapidated state, and the four little rooms, one above another, were begrimed with dirt,—and already tenanted, as Maude afterwards found to her cost, by a goodly number of black beetles and insects. A bell, too, was to be put to the door, and all was to be done as quickly as possible. Mother Angelica's plans never brooked delay. They then went into St. Saviour's Church; it was empty; but "Anglican" enough in appearance to please the sisters. The Superior went up to the highest step of the altar and knelt there for a few minutes, Ursula and Maude kneeling behind her on the lowest step. Mr. Wilson remained at the entrance of the church. Sister Ursula then returned to Westonbury, and the Mother went on to London, Maude accompanying her and acting as waiting-maid to her at the hotel, and bringing up her breakfast in the morning. There was a difficulty about her going to The Cedars; so Mother Angelica sent her to fetch a "Child," who belonged to the Society, and who was staying in London on a visit to her mother, and she was confided to her care till the Superior's return.

They were given a rule of work: Maude was to resume her novice's dress, with the white apron, and they were to spend their time in services at home, and the daily early communion at St. Cyril's Chapel.

This involved very early rising, as the chapel was at a considerable distance; but the two girls were delighted, and spent some happy days together. St. Cyril's Chapel was "so charmingly Anglican:" the three priests—the prostrations—the elevation of the elements—the highly decorated altar, were all in keeping; and "Child Fanny" told Maude much that was new to her, as to the way the Anglican cause was advancing through the earnest working of such men as Mr. Pritchards, her spiritual father.

After a few days they received orders to take rooms at an hotel, and to meet the Superior at the station. Several Anglican priests and ladies called on her at the hotel, and some business had to be settled for the removal of a refractory sister from a London sisterhood to Westonbury. On their road to the station, the Superior told Maude that she wished her to be very particular in showing her every possible respect, as Sister Mary, whom she was going to fetch, had manifested a spirit of great insubordination to *her* Superior.

Stopping at the door of the St. Ann's Sisterhood, a sister, looking ghastly pale and more dead than alive, got with difficulty into the cab, and lay crouched on the floor, hardly able to suppress a low moan of pain. She told Maude afterwards that she was very ill in bed that day, when she received orders to get up and dress with all speed, as the Superior from Westonbury was going to take charge of her. She said that she was suffering so much that the long journey had been agony to her, though they rested a night on the road. When they reached Westonbury, Sister Ursula knelt, as she always did, to receive the Mother, and kissed

her hand. The new sister was treated with great kindness, and she soon appeared in a novice's dress, and looked much improved in health. Her account of St. Ann's Sisterhood was anything but edifying: the cruel rule carried out there had left her for days and weeks alone in her bedroom, wretchedly ill and suffering—no sympathy, no provision made for her comfort, no needed help provided. She soon became much attached to Westonbury, and after some months was admitted as a sister of the Sacred Heart Order. The Rule enjoined perpetual silence, which was only broken when with the Superior.

Maude was much occupied now in working for the Portlyle baskets. The novices made purses of leather, embroidered with beads, and called "Prince Hal's Purses," and they were considered very taking, though they were supposed to be destined for Oxford, as the Portlyle basket-plan was not generally known. She also worked in the kitchen; and then again was called to be in attendance on the Superior. Often now, after the community were in bed, Sisters Ursula, Monica, and Maude were detained in the Mother's apartments till the early morning, talking over plans for Portlyle. On one of these occasions Mother Angelica desired Maude to show her what kind of a basket-woman she would make.

"O mother, let Sister Monica try; she would do it so much better than I can."

"Presumptuous child, to think that you know better than your Mother," replied the Superior, with a smile. "Now, bring your basket."

Maude laughingly tried to personify a poor woman with wares to sell. No; they would tell by her voice

at once that she was a lady; but that was no impediment, remarked the Mother, because her plan was that her basket-women should be poor but respectable,—that the impression conveyed would be, that they were ladies who had met with great reverses of fortune,—which would do very well; they could say, if questioned, that they lived with their Mother, and had known better days.

Maude had, at first, thought that the plan was a mere *jeu d'esprit*, and that she would not really be required to go from house to house with a basket; but the Mother told her that she was perfectly serious in her intention, and proceeded to settle what things were to be taken to Portlyle; how soon it might become self-supporting—that £200 in all was the utmost that "little Portlyle" would ever receive. The expenses of the "ménage" would be very small; the cross and hangings for the Oratory would be ordered in London; mattrasses also should come down from town, that they might not have many purchases to make in Portlyle.

When Maude was alone with the Superior, Mother Angelica spoke much to her of the blessedness of the life she had been called to,—of the importance of the work confided to the sisters as a Society,—nothing less than the replanting of the conventual life, which, at the Reformation, had been sacrilegiously broken up. Maude spoke of a Priory that had been in her family some generations back; and the Superior said, that, undoubtedly, all families holding ecclesiastical lands were in a false and unrighteous position; but that the English Church was full of heretics, and it was only the few Anglo-Catholics that were "the

faithful children of our fallen, but reviving, Church." Maude asked if such and such bishops, whom she named, were heretics. "Undoubtedly," replied the Superior; and she again impressed on her mind the fact she often dwelt upon, that her "precious child" had sadly misjudged her own Church, when she thought that the "Roman" communion could give her anything of real vital truth that was not to be found in the "Anglican."

Maude went about her work at this time with a full conviction that everything she did was pleasing in the sight of God, and with an undoubting confidence in the wisdom and spiritual attainments of the Superior, to whom she had become sincerely attached. It was a recognized principle at Westonbury that the Mother could not be too highly reverenced or loved by the sisters, and that the Mother's love for her spiritual children far exceeded all natural motherly love.

There was but little time in the busy religious observances of the day for searching the Scriptures, indeed *none;* for though every one in the community had her Bible, the only time for reading was taken up in studying any particular book given by the Superior, and the rule of each sister provided for her entire day. In recreation the Bible could not be read, for there was an especial rule that in recreation time the sisters were to relax from all serious occupation for the short time spent together. The Scriptures were heard in the Morning and Evening Lessons in church, and the Psalms of David were read through weekly in the daily canonical hours. The interpretation of Scripture belonged to the Church,

and the sisters were never to question what their spiritual guides taught.

One morning Maude saw sister Constance cording a box ; it was silence time, so not a word ; but she knew they would now go to Portlyle. The day passed ; the Mother, Sisters Ursula and Constance, were gone. Maude had received no orders. She read her "Paradise of the Christian Soul" with increased assiduity as she became aware of her feelings of disappointment ; a "religious" should care for no work but that of lowly obedience.

In a few days, however, Sister Ursula suddenly appeared, and gave Maude orders to start next morning by the early train for Portlyle. She was to take a box to the Mother. Arrived at her destination, she walked from the station with her box, doubting (though it was so heavy that the cord cut her hand, and she was often obliged to put it down) whether it would be right to let any of the boys running before her carry it ; however, as she did not know her way, she at last took a guide who carried the box, and, arriving at Wiggins Court, she found the Mother and Sister Constance at dinner.

Maude thought the house that day the perfection of "Holy Poverty." The Mother was sitting on a mattrass doubled on the floor and covered with blue cloth ; hardly an article of furniture in the house beyond wooden chairs and a deal table ; but all looked clean, thanks to whitewash and new paint ; the floors, though, refused to become white, and the stone flags of the little kitchen were always damp in wet weather—the staircase still in a creaking state.

The next few days were occupied buying and

ordering what things were absolutely necessary, doing the household work, and going to the fine old church. The Cross came down from London, with green and purple hangings for the wall of the Oratory, which was the second little room above the kitchen; the first was furnished as a bedroom with two mattrasses on the floor, and the room above the Oratory was also a bedroom.

The Cross, which reached nearly to the ceiling, was of wood, and, as it was in several parts, it took some little time to put up; this was done by the sisters, the Mother Superior looking on. More cloth was wanted: Maude was sent to procure it; she tried in many shops, but the exact colour was not to be got. She returned and said so; but was sent out again with an order not to return without it. After a long fruitless search, she said (in answer to the Mother's assertion, that it certainly could be procured), that she did not believe it was to be had in Portlyle, that they told her it was a peculiar colour, only used for ecclesiastical purposes, only to be had in London, and a guinea a yard. "Indeed, dearest Mother, I am sure that it cannot be got here."

Mother Angelica looked at her with grave rebuke, and desired her to follow her downstairs. The sister knew that something was wrong;—but what? "Maude, do you know that you have contradicted me twice!" Much conversation followed upon the respect due to Superiors, the rules,—humility,—and the result of it was that Maude felt strangely culpable for having presumed to think differently to the Superior, asked her forgiveness, kissed her hand tenderly, and set to work again in more blind obedience than ever.

However, the cloth was not procurable at Portlyle.

The Superior soon left, giving a rule of work during her absence to the two sisters. Maude was to print the Rules in Old English, in manuscript, for the Oratory, and the Mother would sign them when she returned. The household work, the services at the old church, and the canonical hours were to occupy their time. The basket-work and a day school loomed in the distance ; but at present they were to remain, unnoticed and unknown, in Wiggins Court.

The sisters were very happy together in their household work ; their many services, their silence rule, their recreation hour, the same as at Westonbury, till the Mother returned, and the basket-work was to begin. The Superior decided to go the first day herself, and was dressed in Maude's clothes, and with her basket on her arm went out, but returned soon after, having sold nothing ; she ascribed her failure to her not having been far enough. Maude must go the next day and see what she could do.

This was work which Maude dreaded. What should she say if people questioned her ; and as she was to get into drawing-rooms if she could, what if she were to meet anyone she knew ! But it was sinful to be afraid of any work to be done in Holy Obedience ; and she resolved on blind obedience. However, the next morning, after the post had brought some letters, the Mother was more than usually silent and thoughtful, and she ordered the basket to be put on one of the high shelves in the kitchen cupboard. She afterwards told the sisters

that the Church was not yet prepared for a "Mendicant Order."

This reprieve was always thought to be due to Dr. Oldacre, with whom the Mother was in most constant correspondence.

Left alone again, the sisters worked on for some time, living apparently like the poor people round them; they pumped their water from the pump in the court; they carried their dust-bin out of the court into the middle of the street early in the morning, ready for the scavenger's cart. They cooked, they scrubbed, they washed their dishes, and cleaned their grate; they repeated their services in the Oratory, went to church, and wrote their rule. Their secular garments were getting very much worn, when one day a box arrived from Westonbury with new grey dresses and black bonnets, and they received an order to wear their religious garments again; they were delighted to have a clean dress; and as they wore their girdle and cross, they began to be recognized in the court as some kind of "Catholic people."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ADMISSION.

SISTER CONSTANCE was now very often much disturbed after reading letters from Westonbury, and went about her work with tears in her eyes. Maude knew that she was under discipline for disobedience. In the winter, when they were decorating a large Christmas tree for the children of the poor, Constance had told her of her having been *unsistered* and put under discipline for a year, for disobedience to the Mother. This discipline was not yet over, but now some fresh rebellion was going on. What the cause was Maude did not know ; but poor Constance constantly broke "silence" by such expressions as these. "I can't understand it. What is one to do when one's spiritual father and the Mother have different ideas?" And when one day a letter arrived from the Superior, she wept, and exclaimed several times, "Such tyranny is not to be endured! I believe God is to be served just as well in the world as in this life! I don't understand it—it is too bad!" She was evidently in a most distressed state of mind, but it would have been quite out of rule for Maude to speak in silence hours, even if she had thought it right to intrude upon the subject of her trouble. However, she heard thus much from Con-

stance, that she had promised obedience to her spiritual father, Mr. Copper, of whom she always spoke in terms of the greatest affection and reverence, and that *he* thought differently from the Mother.

Maude tried to console her, by telling her that she thought the fatigue of the last few weeks had been too much for her, that she was in an excited state of mind, or she would not talk so irreverently of the Mother, or the blessed religious life. These little conversations were in recreation time only.

In the midst of all this, one day the Mother arrived. She was very grave, and, taking Maude upstairs, asked if she thought she could manage alone for a few days, as she intended sending Sister Constance back to Westonbury that evening—she saw that her state of mind was not satisfactory, and she needed discipline such as she could not give her at Portlyle. Poor Constance! Maude helped her to make up her little bundle for the railroad, which she was doing in tears, and with a few exclamations of concentrated indignation. "To be sent off in this way!" "Such tyranny was not to be borne!" "It was too bad in the Mother!" "Not to be endured!"

However, the discipline of a few months answered apparently, for the next time the Sisters met, Constance asked Maude to forget all that had passed at Portlyle, saying, "The precious Mother, how much I owe her!—how much I needed discipline!"

After Sister Constance was gone, the Superior told Maude to get some eggs for their tea, for she was not sure that Mr. Wilson might not come that afternoon; and after this she told her to walk out in search of the poor; that she was going out and would take the

key with her, but that about six o'clock she would be at home. Maude returned at this time, but could not get in; she walked about for half an hour, and then came back again. The door was now open, and she found the Mother at tea, and a gentleman, whom she concluded to be Mr. Wilson, on the other side of the fire-place; but, when she raised her eyes again, she saw that it was Dr. Oldacre sitting by the fire. He took no notice of her, but continued his conversation with the Superior in an under tone. The Mother then told her to take off her bonnet, and to light the candles in the Oratory, which she did, and, when it was ready, Mother Angelica and the reverend father went upstairs, leaving her to put away the tea things. Maude did not think it strange that Dr. Oldacre should be there, as she knew he was the Mother's confessor; but it did strike her as great inconsistency in the Superior admitting him when she had told the sisters that they could not see their spiritual guides at Portlyle, as it would not do to have any of the clergy seen in Wiggins Court.

Mother Angelica and the priest remained in the Oratory till nearly ten o'clock, when she let him out at the house door, and, returning to the kitchen, had a little talk with Maude about her work, but made no allusion to his visit.

The next day another sister arrived, and, having procured a map of Portlyle, the Superior divided it into two districts, one for each sister. They were to seek out the poor and sick, learn all about the schools, get the children to be baptized, and induce the people to go to church as much as possible, and the dying to seek Holy Communion. Their rule of work was three

hours in the morning and four in the afternoon among the poor. In addition to this, they were desired to find rooms for Mother Angelica in the neighbourhood of the old church, as it would not do when the work began to be known, for visitors to come to Wiggins Court. Maude was especially directed to furnish the rooms to be procured with old oak, and it was all to be done in as short a space of time as possible.

The Mother left, and when she again returned all was ready for her reception, and she was installed in the desired locality, in a quaint, old-fashioned apartment, furnished with matted floors, and old oak chairs and tables.

Maude had had considerable trouble in finding suitable furniture for these rooms, and, in her search for carved oak, she met with an amusing adventure. She had found out a curiosity shop, the owner of which was a singular character, an intelligent but eccentric old man, who shook his head at Maude in her conventual costume.

"Child, child," he said, "you belong to one of these Roman Catholic places."

"No, Mr. Gunlet," she replied; "we are in the Church of England."

"More's the pity—more's the pity—though I wouldn't say so much against you as some do. You think you're doing good. Ah! can't speak," continued he, as Maude looked at some curiosity near her. "Can't speak! yes, that's one of your ways. Well, come along, sister of mercy, or sister of misery. Ah, poor child!—doesn't know better; but I'll let you have the chairs, though, you see, I don't like parting with them—I don't like parting with them,"

repeated the old man, as he landed Maude safely in a loft from the top of a ladder.

She was delighted with the treasures of oak furniture around her, and Mr. Gunlet was so pleased with her admiration, that she soon made her bargain and secured her chairs. Many visits were paid to the old curiosity shop, and Mother Angelica expressed her satisfaction with the result.

Whilst the Superior was at Portlyle, the work of the sisters was very much increased. They were continually going to and fro from Wiggins Court to the "Cloisters," as the Mother's apartments were called—some fifteen or twenty minutes' walk each way. Letters for the post had to be taken at any hour—parcels to the railroad—packets for the mail train—and no thought as to the amount of work crowded into the day: nor did Mother Angelica ever seem to consider distances or time, or the sister's strength, when she had an object in view.

On one occasion, Maude was fast asleep in Wiggins Court, when she was awakened by a sister who had just come from the Cloisters.

"Maude, Mother wants you to take her some bread. I have not a moment to stay. I am to catch the mail train for this letter. I have Mother's key, so you can lock the door."

She was gone almost before Maude was fully aroused. Bread to the Cloisters at that hour! She could not go; and she shuddered as she thought that it was just the time the public-houses would be closing, and drunken people would be about; and there was that walk by the quay, too, before she got to a quiet road. O, no! she could not nerve herself to go; and

then she was so tired—it was cruel to send for her!—If Sister Mabel would only have stayed a moment, she might have gone a little way with her. Yet, go she must, and that without delay; every moment was precious,—the sooner she got there, the sooner she would be able to return;—and was not God with her? Thus reasoned Maude, as she hastily dressed, ashamed of the tears she could not repress; and, taking the loaf under her shawl, hurried as swiftly as she could to the Cloisters.

It was small consolation, with the dreaded walk back to the Court in prospect, to hear Mother Angelica say that she was sorry she had sent for the bread.

Before she left Portlyle the Mother told her that she was going soon to recall her for her public admission, and had a long conversation with her in the little Oratory in Wiggins Court. The Mother was reclining on a mattrass, which was placed on the floor by the side of the cross, and which served as her bed when she occasionally passed the night in the Court. It did not strike the sisters as incongruous, that one so holy as the Superior should have so holy a bedroom as the Oratory; and when Maude brought up her breakfast and her letters in the morning, she curtsied reverently at the door, as the custom was, both on entering the Oratory or the Mother's presence.

Seated by the Superior's side on the floor, and holding her hand, Maude listened to all she said about the "religious life," as if it were truth which could not be gainsaid. "It was, undoubtedly, the highest and most blessed vocation upon earth." Still the Mother spoke of marriage as "an honourable estate not to be despised;" but one in which the Lord could not be

so nearly followed as in celibacy,—"that the religious life was the highest on earth, and the 'religious' the nearest Christ in heaven." . . . . . .

"That the Church and her three communions—Anglican, Roman, and Greek—was essentially one;—that it was not by individuals leaving one communion for another that visible unity would be brought about; but by each striving to bring the communions together in unity—each in that in which he was born; that she would never think of inducing Romanists to leave their communion; and why should they strive to make us leave ours?" . . . . . .

"That Maude would find all the essence of true Anglo-Catholicism at Westonbury—in the Society and in their Priests, though there was much less to excite Puritanical and Protestant fanaticism against it, than had injudiciously been allowed to appear at St. Stephanus; that she must consider it a high position this of belonging to a little band of the true daughters of our deeply injured Church, devoting their lives to bring back the 'religious life.'"

She spoke of the *contemplative* life as the highest of the three orders, and one that Maude might look forward to; but that, for the present, the active life would discipline her soul better.

She spoke much of Holy Obedience—of its great power, and how much she desired to see its grace in her child. "If only you were as obedient as Sister Ursula, my child, you would be everything I could wish," she continued, laying her hand on Maude's head. She then said that she trusted that she would be always faithful to the Anglican communion,—or, much as she desired to admit her publicly, she should hesitate doing so.

Maude replied that she was sure that she would never enter the Roman communion, as she was quite satisfied of the oneness of the Church in the three communions, and that her obedience to her spiritual guides would be sufficient to ensure her remaining faithful to England.

Maude was soon after this conversation recalled to Westonbury. Several days were passed in silence and prayer in the Oratory. Mr Leigh was absent, or she would have gone to confession; but Mother Angelica wrote to him to ask if he could be back in time to perform the Service of Admission, and she told Maude that the fact of confession was not of so much consequence, as this admission was but in fact a repetition of her previous one.

The morning of the admission came. Maude had kept vigil, and thought that the service she was preparing to attend was the last entrance door into a state of heavenly holiness and perfection, that henceforth "she would have but one thought, and that all in heaven"—"her path on earth straight as an arrow marked every inch by Holy Obedience," so that she could not err in it; and that thought was to her mind most restful—nothing to do but to obey!

And then she had given up all her relations that she might have her whole treasure in Heaven; she might think of them in her prayers, and hope to meet them above; but on earth they would be as it were dead to her. This crushing down of all natural affection, and the tears she shed at the thought of the estrangement that must henceforth be hers towards all whom she loved outside the community, were, as

Mother Angelica told her, "an acceptable sacrifice to God."

The Mother told her also, that she would wish her to follow a good old custom in the religious life, namely, after admission to keep strict silence for two or three days—a silence which was called in some book which she quoted, "The Silence of the Espousals." Maude was in an extatic state of feeling;—to be now one with all the religious that had ever lived; to enter into all the sacramental efficacy of this exalted vocation; to have every thought given to Christ, and to become in time a saint in the paths of perfection! What more on earth was there to be wished for?

Thomas à Kempis, Rodrigues' Christian Perfection, which had again been given to her, and the Paradise of the Christian Soul, were her study, and all the passages in Scripture that related to leaving father or mother for Christ were dwelt upon by her more than ever; and she entered the Oratory with the thought that she had now indeed really given up all, cast all her treasure at the feet of her Lord.

It was six o'clock in the morning. The sisters were all assembled. The Mother sat in her chair by the cross in her abbess's costume. Mr. Roberts—the priest who officiated in Mr. Leigh's absence—stood by the little altar in his canonicals. The Oratory was beautifully decked with flowers. Maude was placed in a line with the sisters, the Mother Assistant being at her side; and when she had been led to the Mother, and had on her knees made the promise of obedience to her, and had asked the prayers of the priest, and had been received by the sisters with a kiss of welcome—she suddenly remembered her own mother,

and it struck her forcibly and painfully how great a deception she was practising on her. True, she had a grey dress, and the other sisters wore black; but she had been received into the community as one of themselves—the same admission service, the same rules, the same promise of obedience—and yet Lady Deerswood knew nothing of it, and would certainly never have given her consent!

It was only a momentary thought, quickly succeeded by un undefined idea that her first obedience would still be due to her mother; but the present moment was engrossing her thoughts and affections completely. The Admission Service over, the community went in a body to St. Mark for Holy Communion, after which they met in the refectory for the first meal, which had all the appearance of a wedding breakfast—the table decorated, the large sugared cake covered with fresh white flowers. The sisters each had a bouquet prepared for them, and for Maude, "Sister Maude," a lovely one, composed entirely of white exotics. She was now, as one of the sisters whispered to her, "The new Bride of Christ!" and the Mother Superior sat at the head of the table, smilingly watching her "precious child," who, in her extatic state of feeling, was quite inclined to keep "The Silence of the Espousals."

We give the *Admission Service* used on this occasion:—

*V.* O God, make speed to save us.

*R.* O Lord, make haste to help us.

"Gloria Patri." Hymn, "Veni Creator Spiritus."

*Ps.* xlv., *Ant.* i. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be

likened unto ten virgins ✠ which took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom, and five of them were wise and five were foolish (*Ps.* xlvi).

*Ant.* ii. They that were foolish took their lamps ✠ and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept (*Ps.* xlvii).

*Ant.* iii. And at midnight there was a cry made, ✠ Behold the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

*Ps.* xlviii., *Ant.* iv. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went with him to the marriage, ✠ and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

*Little Chapter.* Go and ye shall receive; pray for few days unto you, that they may be shortened; the kingdom is already prepared for you: watch. Mother, embrace thy children, and bring them up with gladness. Make their feet as fast as a pillar, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord. Fear not, thou mother of the children, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord.

For thy help will I send my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah, after whose counsel I have sanctified and prepared for thee twelve trees laden with divers fruits.

And as many fountains flowing with milk and honey, and seven mighty mountains whereupon there grow roses and lilies, whereby I fill thy children with joy.

Do right to the widow; judge for the fatherless; give to the poor; defend the orphan; clothe the naked.

Heal the broken and the weak; laugh not a lame man to scorn; defend the maimed, and let the blind man come into the sight of my clearness.

Help the old and young within thy walls. Wheresoever thou findest the dead, take them and bury them, and I will give thee the first place in my resurrection.

Abide still, O my people, and take thy rest, for thy quietness shall come.

Nourish thy children, O thou good nurse. Stablish their feet.

As for the servants whom I have given thee, there shall not one of them perish, for I will require them from among thy number.

Be not weary, for when the day of trouble and heaviness cometh, others shall weep and be sorrowful, but thou shalt be merry and have abundance.

The heathen shall envy thee, but they shall be able to do nothing against thee, saith the Lord.

My hands shall cover thee, so that thy children shall not see hell.

Be joyful, O thou mother, with the children, for I will deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Remember thy children that sleep, for I will bring them out of the sides of the earth, and show mercy unto them, for I am merciful, saith the Lord Almighty.

Embrace thy children until I come, and show mercy unto them, for my wells run over, and my grace shall not fail.

And therefore I say unto you, O ye heathen, that hear and understand, look for your Shepherd. He shall give you everlasting rest, for He is nigh at hand that shall come in the end of the world.

Flee the shadow of this world, receive the joyfulness of your glory. I testify my Saviour openly.

Receive the gift that is given you, and be glad. Give

thanks unto Him that has called you to the heavenly kingdom.

Behold those that be seated in the feast of the Lord, and have received glorious garments of the Lord.

*V.* Lord have mercy.

*R.* Christ have mercy.

*V.* Lord have mercy.

"Our Father."

*V.* O Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us,

*R.* And grant us Thy salvation.

*V.* Look upon this Thy servant;

*R.* Who putteth her trust in Thee.

*V.* Be Thou to her a strong tower,

*R.* From the face of her enemy.

*V.* Let not the enemy be able to do her violence,

*R.* Nor the son of wickedness hurt her.

*V.* Lord, send her help from the sanctuary,

*R.* And strengthen her out of Zion.

*V.* Lord, hear our prayer,

*R.* And let our cry come unto Thee.

*V.* O let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me.

*R.* For all they that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed; and such as transgress without a cause shall be put to confusion.

*V.* Shew me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths.

*R.* Lead me forth in Thy truth and learn me, for Thou art the God of my salvation: in Thee has been my hope all the day long.

*V.* Call to remembrance, O Lord, Thy tender mercies, which have been ever of old.

*R.* Remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to Thy mercy, think thou upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness.

*V.* Gracious and righteous is the Lord, therefore shall He teach sinners in the way.

*R.* Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them shall He learn His way.

*V.* All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

*R.* For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my sin, for it is great.

*V.* What man is he that feareth the Lord, him shall He teach in the way He shall choose.

*R.* His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the land.

*V.* The secret of the Lord is among them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

*R.* Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.

*V.* Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and in misery.

*R.* The sorrows of my heart are enlarged. O bring Thou me out of my troubles.

*V.* Look upon my adversity and misery, and forgive me all my sin.

*R.* Consider mine enemies how many they are, and they bear a tyrannous hate against me.

*V.* O keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be confounded, for I have put my trust in Thee.

*R.* Deliver Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

*V.* The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?

*R.* One thing have I desired of the Lord which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple.

*V.* For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His

tabernacle, yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He hide me, and set me upon a rock of stone.

*R.* O tarry thou the Lord's leisure. Be strong, and he shall comfort thine heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord.

*Collect* i. O Blessed and Holy Trinity, who possessest all things, cleansest all things, adornest all things; O Blessed Majesty of God, who fillest all things, containest all things, disposest all things; O blessed and holy Name of God, who sanctifiest all things, blessest all things, enrichest all things. O God, Holy of Holies! with lowliest devotion we entreat Thy clemency; that Thou wouldest vouchsafe to send the dew of Thy grace, with the abundance of Thy blessing, on our Bishop, and on this Society; bestow on it all good; drive from it all evil; uphold it with Thy blessing; let Thy holy angels dwell with us to preserve Thy servants in peace, that whensoever Thy servants shall herein call upon Thy holy Name, their prayers may be heard by Thee, our loving Lord, for Thy great Name's sake. And with Thy strong hand and mighty arm graciously protect, mercifully hear, and preserve us with everlasting defence; let us dwell together as in Thy Tabernacle, that, ever glad and rejoicing in Thy holy worship, we may steadfastly persevere in the confession of Thy Holy Name, and in the true faith in Thee. Amen.

*Collect* ii. O God, who didst form the body and breathe into it the soul, who despisest no age, rejectest no sex, countest no condition unworthy of Thy grace, but art to all alike the Creator and Redeemer; encompass this Thy servant, and all who shall in this house give themselves to Thy service and worship Thee, with the shield of Thy protection. Guide her in wisdom, and prepare her for every work of virtue and glory. Protect her senses and her limbs, that sin may have no dominion over her soul and body; and longing to live under Thy grace, may the enemy obtain no advantage over this vessel, dedicated to Thy Name.

Adorn and arm her with sound faith, assured hope, and firm charity, that she may overcome all the desires of the enemy; despising things present, may she follow after those to come. May she prefer fasting to feasting, holy reading and prayer to entertainments; that, fed by prayer, filled with spiritual instruction, enlightened by watching, she may fulfil the works of her calling. By the gift of Thy Holy Spirit, may there be in her a prudent modesty, a wise kindness, grave gentleness, holy freedom. May she be fervent in charity, and love nothing out of Thee; live worthy of praise, and desire not to be praised; may she glorify Thee in the holiness of her body, and the purity of her soul. In love may she fear Thee, in love serve Thee. Be Thou her honour, Thou her will, Thou her joy; her consolation in sorrow, her counsel in difficulty. Thou, defence in injury; Thou, patience in tribulation; Thou, in poverty abundance; Thou, in fasting food; Thou, in sickness medicine. In Thee may she have all things.

Fence Thy servant within and without with this armour, and vouchsafe to her to fulfil her course without stumbling, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*Collect* iii. O King of kings and Lord of lords, Thou who, when on earth, hadst not where to lay Thy head, it is not for us, O Lord, who would follow Thee, to live in luxury or to be clothed in soft raiment. We are not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies. Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. Grant us to have no treasure but Thee; grant us to turn from all that is out of Thee. Be Thou all our desire, that where our treasure is, there may our heart be also, O most blessed and most sweet Jesus, our Master. Amen.

*Collect* iv. O Lord Jesus, our Lord and King, thou who wert made obedient to death, the death of the cross, that we might learn of Thee to be lowly of heart, give Thy servant grace to observe, with love and diligent humility,

the promise of obedience she this day desires to make. Give her grace to obey for love of Thee, and henceforth to have no will but Thine. Amen.

*Collect* v. Hear, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our prayers, and send the spirit of Thy benediction upon this Thy servant, that, enriched with the heavenly gift, she may both obtain the grace of Thy Majesty, and give to others an example of holy conversation, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*Collect* vi. We call upon Thee, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Everlasting God, for this Thy servant, who hath devoted herself to serve Thee, with a pure mind and with a clean heart, that thou wouldest vouchsafe to unite her with the hundred and forty and four thousand in whose mouth is found no guile, so that through Thy grace she may remain undefiled unto the end, through our undefiled Lord, Thy Son, Jesus Christ, who with Thee livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

*Collect* vii. Grant, we beseech Thee, unto this Thy servant, perseverance unto the end, that at the coming of the Great King she may be found worthy to enter with joy through the opened portals into the heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Then shall the Mother Assistant lead the novice by the hand to the Mother Superior, and say—

"My Mother will you receive M——— to be your child?"

Then shall the Mother Superior say—

"Do you, my children, desire this sister to be received into your community?"

Then shall the sisters say—

"We do."

Then shall the Mother Superior say to the novice—

"Will you be content to live like the rest of your sisters, giving up yourself entirely to the care and direction of your Superior?"

Here is made the Promise of Obedience, kneeling—

"My Mother, I will, by the help of God, obey you, as our Rule doth direct, in all love, and honour, and humility."

The Mother Superior holds the Cross—

"The sign of the cross is a sacramental symbol, in the which lies deep mystery. When thou shalt have learned this mystery, thou shalt perceive that of self-surrender. When thou shalt have accomplished self-surrender, thou shalt have discovered wherein lieth the mystery of peace."

The Mother invests with the Cross—

"Sister of the Order of the Holy Communion, receive the Holy Cross, given to thee to the end that it may always be engraven on thy heart, and set forth in thy life and conversation, and that, being drawn with the silken cords of His love who died for thee, and, fastened to the cross with Him, thou mayest, in whatever measure He sees fit, partake in His sufferings, and so present thyself as a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Here is sung the "Te Deum."

*Prayer.* O Christ Jesu! we adore Thee, who wast lifted up from the earth, that Thou mightest draw all men unto Thee. We see Thee on the cross with outstretched arms as though Thou wouldest embrace us, and we hear thee crying out, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will receive and refresh you.

O Lord, if we come to Thee too slowly, draw us, O Jesu, with the cords of that love which Thou didst show dying upon the cross! To know and to seek Jesus and Him crucified, be this our chief, our sole delight! God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We love the Lord, who art so loving to us, with our whole heart, more than ourselves and all things; and therefore we do now desire to receive Thee, that we may feed on Thee, and be changed into Thee, and be made one spirit with Thee, so that nought may separate us from Thee, but that we may cleave unto Thee for ever. Amen.

*Ant.* Watch, therefore.

*Ps.* xxiii. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.

The Mother Assistant shall then present the sister who has just been received to the Superior and to the priests, whose prayers she shall ask—Pray for me.

Then shall she approach the sisters to embrace, and say, Pray for me.

Hymn, "Pange Lingua."

Of the Body bright and gracious,
Tongue rehearse the mystery,
And the Blood all pure and precious.

. . . . . .

In the whirl of excited feeling which possessed Maude's whole soul, it is not surprising that she did not pause to reflect on what she was doing. This solemn and picturesque ceremony was to bind her, soul and body, to a state of spiritual slavery; the ideal of the religious life was the delusive "*ignis fatuus*" which she was following blindly, instead of the "True Light." How many are now treading in the same steps!

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE NIGHT OF TERROR.

WE must now return with "Sister" Maude to Portlyle, where she was sent again, not long after her public admission, with ten pounds in her possession for "Little Portlyle," as the Mother called it in a joke, as she gave her the money.

Maude found one or two sisters there when she arrived. As a rule two only remained together in Wiggins Court, and sometimes one was left for several days together, alone. The routine of their life was for some little time uninterrupted. They went daily in and out among the poor, and attended services at the St. Saviour's church early in the morning. They set their house in order, pumped water, dusted, scrubbed; prepared soup for the poor; swept the black beetles from under the mattrasses, picked them out of the sugar bason, recited services in the Oratory; on Sundays carried their dinner to the bake-house; beer, when ordered to be taken, had to be procured at a public-house near; meat was purchased and brought home by themselves. They lived, in fact, the life of quite poor people, and were very happy in the busy work of their "religious life."

But a time came when, either from a press of work

elsewhere requiring all the strength of the community, or from the pre-occupation or forgetfulness of the Superior, Maude was left *quite alone* in Portlyle for a fortnight.

During this time she heard but seldom from the Mother, though she despatched her own letters with the daily account of her rule.

Her time was fully occupied; the little *ménage* arranged, she locked the house door, took the key in her pocket, her basket of grocery for the poor in her hand, and went out in her district, which comprised all the old part of the town. It often struck her as absurd, the idea of so enormous a district being supposed to be under her supervision. Moreover, the distances was too great to combine much church going with the visiting, which soon became intensely interesting; but the amount of poverty and destitution she came in contact with overwhelmed her mind, and she fell readily into the conviction that she was, indeed, needed in the midst of so much distress and misery. How was it possible for anyone to lead any other life than that of a sister of mercy in such a world of suffering!

Maude would have been as much surprised as would be many another benevolent giver, but shallow thinker, had she been told that her indiscriminate almsgiving was positively tending to increase the very evils she deplored. Those who know the causes of poverty and destitution best, know well that helping the poor to help themselves is the only way to lift them up permanently; and that there is no task more difficult, or one requiring more laborious thought, more patient, firm, self-denying individual effort, from the

framer of laws, or the philanthropist, than the endeavour to stem the tide of poverty, vice, and misery.

But Maude knew little of the causes productive of the destitution around, and her only thought was how to make the most soup, and distribute the largest amount of relief out of the money she had in hand. Then, too, all her work had a halo of romance in her mind. The cleaning out the room, and making the fire for a poor old bedridden woman —dispensing the soup from her can into the cracked bason of a cobbler, who, whilst he pronounced the soup "stunning," apologized for not asking her to sit down, as he had not a "stick of furniture in his cellar" —the making her way through the darkest and most dilapidated looking alleys and courts—the going into old houses filled from cellar to garret with human beings, where her appearance caused a general eagerness to get some of the contents of her basket.

One lane in which she visited, she was desired some time after by Mother Angelica not to return to, as one of the clergy had told her it was not safe. People had been robbed and thrown into the canal close by; but fortunately at this time she was ignorant of the resorts of thieves and desperate characters into which she penetrated, and, fearless of danger, she passed on as in a dream, becoming so absorbed in her work that she walked for hours without being sensible of fatigue, though sometimes she employed a child to carry a loaf or basket for her. One small boy constantly strayed into her kitchen in Wiggins Court. His mother was her next door neighbour, to whom Maude was indebted for several friendly acts, such as

pumping water for her, and helping her to carry the dust-bin.

This was the only neighbour she had made acquaintance with, and that was only outside the door ; and great difficulty she had once in keeping to the rule not to admit anyone within the house, for an Irish beggar got one foot over the threshold, and would not *move* till Maude had promised to go and see him. She went next day, and strange was the sight that presented itself to her when she did find him out at the top of one of the large old-fashioned houses which had become a complete rookery. Five families lived in this one room. The Irish beggar, with his wife and several children, two of them girls who sold oranges, were domiciled at the window end of the room, all huddled together on some straw. Maude was loudly called upon to look at the beggar's sore leg, for which she had brought some lint. The wife, presuming to speak, was silenced by a violent blow from her husband, which she was too much cowed to resent. The children laughed!

At the other end of the room was an old woman in rags. Near the empty fire-place another old woman and a younger one were crouched on the floor. A young man was leaning against the wall ; she saw him kick the girl to make her move, and when she rose the poor creature seemed scarcely human, so neglected and dirty. Maude's heart sank within her ; she felt again how much need there was for help—she longed to be able to do something for the poor girl, but for the present the Irish family claimed her attention. At last they became so importunate, that, after emptying her basket, she thought

she had better take her departure, and, with difficulty, she groped her way down the dark old stairs and into the street.

Sometimes she was amused at the difficulties into which she fell.

She had represented to the Mother in her letters that her shoes were worn out, but no notice had been taken of it. One day when she was out, she felt her foot caught, and, looking down, perceived that the shoe and foot had parted company; she had to shuffle on as she best could to a shoe shop, for common sense took *carte blanche* to supply the deficiency without the Mother's orders.

She afterwards learned that others of her companions, more timid, or more fettered, in the Sisterhood by the rule which allowed of no independent purchases, and no asking for any article, however needed, more than once, had suffered severely from wearing shoes that let in water, and in one case the exposure to cold laid the foundation of a fatal illness. But in the parent establishment the Rules were to be carried out, sick or well.

On another occasion she was called on to use her own discretion in a different way. Answering a ring at the door of her little dwelling, she was met by a smartly-dressed young man, who held out a shilling to her, saying abruptly that it was the custom of the landlord of these houses to give a shilling and a bottle of spirits to each tenant. "But," he added, more courteously, "perhaps you would prefer a bottle of sherry?"

Maude thought it would be best to take graciously what was kindly meant, however oddly bestowed, and

considering that they were living among the poor, where both the money and the wine would be of use, accepted the offer with thanks and took the shilling, and the young man quickly returned with the sherry. She felt inclined to doubt the discretion of the landlord, when she found how long the revels were kept up that night, a platform for the occasion being put up at the end of the Court. However, she was left unmolested to employ her share of the bounty as she thought best.

This kind of life was carried on daily. The morning was employed in this round of visits: in the middle of the day Maude returned to her little house, had the "Sext" service in the Oratory; dined; had "Nones;" and then started again with the key in her pocket for her afternoon round among the poor.

In the evening she returned, had "Vesper" service before tea, wrote her daily report, shut up the house, and ended the day with the "Complin" service and "Matins" in the Oratory. On Sundays there was a cessation of outer work; but there was the, to Maude, formidable attendance at the old church, where she had to sit just under the pulpit, and was continually annoyed by the boys, both before and after service, as they passed her at the church door,—calling in an undertone after her, "Hang the Pope; hang his sisters! Sister of Mercy, Sister of Misery!" and the like.

She took herself to task for minding such absurdities, and was glad when some time later her Rule was altered, and she was ordered to go to St. Saviour's Church, where she felt more at home with the Anglican surroundings. Often, now, when passing up the

aisle to her seat in the old church, she was so nervous that her feet almost refused to carry her to her accustomed place.

But then in the sermon, too, the preacher being a faithful teacher of the principles of the Reformed Church, many allusions seemed as if they were aimed at her! Those Sunday Services were a real trial to poor Maude. On one occasion, the sermon being on the subject of the Lord's Supper, the clergyman earnestly and ably warned the people against the doctrine of transubstantiation, and spoke of the energetic efforts the Romanists in the English Church were making,—and at the conclusion of a sentence, turning his voice to the side of the pulpit underneath which Maude sat, said, that they were, one by one, bringing back all that England had protested against, "even to the introduction of monastic institutions." Maude had thrown back her veil, as the day was very hot, and now that all eyes were turned upon her, she would have given anything to have been hidden behind its thick crape. With a strong effort her imaginative and susceptible mind immediately suggested a remedy: two angels with outspread wings seemed to stand on each side of her, and their soft white wings closed in front of her face, giving her just the protection she needed. So vivid was this imagination that she wondered if God had sent it to her. At all events she felt relieved and thankful.

Had she known more of human nature, she would have perceived that she had lately been leading precisely the kind of life calculated peculiarly to work on the imagination,—the solitary hours, the painfully exciting work, the spare diet, the religious observances,

—all were a preparation for that overwrought state of mind and body which in all ages has given rise to wild legends of visions—dreams, and supposed supernatural communications.

The histories of Francis of Assisi,—Catherine of Sienna,—and others, furnish a vast number of such cases; and, probably, a life of this solitary and ascetic character, would produce such a state in almost any person of susceptible nerves and lively imagination.

Her solitary services in the Oratory, too, which always seemed to her so full of rest and peace, were producing a tension of mind and nerves, of which she was little aware.

In the evening, her work over, her daily rule written, the house-door locked, she chanted her services, and remained in the Oratory till she went to bed. There was a strange stillness in the scene—the large wooden cross, the two tall candles on each side of it, the dimly-lighted little room; she sometimes felt half afraid of her own voice chanting in low tones the familiar words of the Psalms; she was accustomed, after the service, to kneel or sit on the floor by her low hassock, and to meditate and write in a little private manuscript book.

One evening, as she was almost mechanically intoning the beautiful words of the Psalm, "In te Domine speravi,"—a weight of undefined thought on her mind, she felt a sense of non-reality in her surroundings—a longing desire for greater nearness to God—a positive dissatisfaction with things around her; she closed her Psalter and sank on her knees in silent prayer, or rather in an ignorant but real and earnest effort to realize God's presence.

The old thought, which was of constant recurrence,

was on her mind:—Why was there so much misery in the world; why, if even she, a creature, felt so much for the sinning and suffering—why did God permit evil! Would He not help her, teach her, to see what it all meant,—for He *must* be right—His will *must* be good? God, the Almighty, could not err!

In the intensity of her soul's prayer it seemed to her excited mind that the room was filling with evil beings; one, especially, seemed close to her side, crouching down, and saying almost in her ear, "Your soul is mine!" Maude dared not raise her head: for, though she knew it was imagination that conjured up the scene, yet she had become aware of a *new* conviction in her soul, such as she had never felt before, and which was full of exceeding terror—she was a lost soul! for the first time in her life she saw that she was under the condemnation of sin, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." She shrank back in terror from the awful conviction; a stillness, as of death, was upon her as she looked on her condition before God—a sinner, deserving condemnation! She had never before really *believed* that any created being *deserved* death from its Creator; *but now all was so clear!* And, as again and again she heard the words, "Your soul is mine," she answered, "Christ has died!" and the most blessed *fact* of the Atonement became as apparent to her quickened spiritual apprehension as was the deadly nature of sin: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!"

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The conflict lasted for hours. Maude—with her

head buried in her hands, not daring to move, seeing herself, as it were, hanging between life and death, heaven and hell—passed through that state of mind which has been the experience of many Christians in all ages of the Church, and which in her case, as in others, resulted in a vitality of faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ, which brings a peace into the soul passing understanding.

All doubt and fear was gone — all evil visions vanished. She was in a state of calm joy, perfectly indescribable, but known to all who by the power of God the Holy Spirit see that in Christ they *have* passed from death into life, that they *have* received perfect remission of all their sin.

Passage after passage of the word of God, which from her early training she knew so well in the letter, recurred to her mind, each bringing strength and power into her soul. "I am the Door, by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture."

"I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"The Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive

power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

"And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their forehead."

Her heart was full of praise and thanksgiving, and, as late at night she rose from her knees and left the Oratory, she was rejoicing in a sense of the loving kindness and tender mercy of God, who had provided such a full and perfect remedy for the sin and misery of mankind.

There was no thought in her mind of the "Compline" service left unfinished—of "Matins" not begun —of the "pride and presumption" of thus seeking for things spiritual outside the rule of Holy Obedience—not that any doubt had yet arisen in her thoughts as to the truth of the system she was in; but she had entered into a consciousness of life in Christ so present and actual that, though she knew it not, she was already standing in the liberty wherewith Christ had made her free.

In after years, she looked back with thankfulness to those lonely hours in Wiggins Court—not only as an era in her own spiritual life, but as affording her ground for hope that God in His gracious Providence would overrule events and circumstances, however untoward, in the lives of other "sisters" as ignorant and deluded as herself; enabling them by the Word, and in the

power of the Holy Spirit, to become free from the bondage of superstition and priestcraft.

To resume our narrative. Maude went on happily in her lonely routine of work; but she was delighted, after these two weeks of complete solitude, to see a sister and novice from Westonbury in the aisle of the old church as she entered. They were to stay the night with her, *en route* to some other place, but she did not know their destination. She was again left alone, when late in the afternoon of the third day the Mother Superior appeared with two novices, Lilla and Emily. The former had but just recovered from an all but fatal attack of fever, and Emily was in a state of extreme depression from recent family bereavement. Both girls looked surprised on their entrance into the dismal little kitchen. Soon they all went into the Oratory for Vespers, and, then leaving the novices to make tea, Maude accompanied the Superior to the Cloisters, to put things in order for her, as she intended passing the night there. On the way the Mother said that she was going to leave Emily at Portlyle, whilst she paid a visit at some distance. Lilla was to return to Westonbury that night. She must order a fly to remain on the stand, to take them down to the mail train. Having received Mother Angelica's directions—which were to return to the Court, tell Emily to go to bed, and bring Lilla to her—Maude hastened back, thinking that, though the Mother must know best, yet that Lilla appeared far too ill to take such a long journey back alone, and that both girls were in wretched health to be brought to rough it in Wiggins Court.

She tried to cheer them—silence rule was relaxed

—and, when they had finished supper, she persuaded Emily to go to bed, hoping that she was so tired she might soon fall asleep, though she would only take off her outer dress, and had thrown herself down on one of the mattrasses; poor girl, she looked thoroughly bewildered; and Lilla added to Maude's anxiety by saying that Emily had some deep grief, and ought not to be left. But what could be done? The Superior's orders must be obeyed; so, hoping soon to return, they hurried to the Cloisters.

The Mother had a long conversation with Lilla, Maude, meanwhile, remaining in the inner room. She heard the different strikings of the church clock—she thought of that walk back by the quay! Ten o'clock already! She could not but feel anxious; and what of Emily left all alone? Surely it was very injudicious in the Mother to detain Lilla so long; but, after all, it was not her affair. This impatience was sinful—she was breaking rule by commenting on the Mother's proceedings—far better pass the time in prayer and meditation on heavenly things! But still common sense would be heard, and, when the interview was over, she suggested that they should return as quickly as possible. How thankful was she when they reached the Court; but, as she unlocked the door, and entered into the dark house, was there not something unusual? In an instant she saw that the kitchen window was open! She rushed upstairs and felt for Emily in the dark. The bed was empty! By lighting a candle, they found her dress and shoes, bonnet and shawl, but *she* was gone!

"O, Sister Maude!" cried Lilla, "she has destroyed herself—she has thrown herself into the water."

The next few moments were occupied in questioning Lilla, and entreating her to be calm and ready to receive Emily if she returned or were brought back. Maude herself must go instantly to the Superior, but some one must stay in the house. Lilla at last consented to remain, and Maude, fortunately finding the cab that had been ordered, on the stand, jumped into it and was soon at the Cloisters.

Mother Angelica was for the moment startled. What was to be done? Maude was surprised to see how completely she had lost her self-control.

She represented to the Mother that Lilla must not be left a moment longer than absolutely necessary.

They returned in the cab to the Court, where they found Lilla fearfully excited, and again repeating that Emily had destroyed herself.

Mother Angelica reproved her for her want of self-possession, told her to remain in the house, and went herself with Maude to the clergyman of the parish, who very kindly returned with them to the little house, and took all the necessary steps, communicating with the police, &c.; and at last towards three o'clock in the morning, Emily was found. She had been seen by a woman wandering in the neighbourhood of Wiggins Court, without her dress, and bareheaded; and the woman, thinking that she might get a reward for finding her, took her to her own room in a tavern not far distant. There the police traced her, and Mother Angelica had the satisfaction of recovering her after three or four hours of intense anxiety. Maude, after helping the Mother and Emily at the Cloisters, returned to the Court and remained with Lilla, whose midnight journey had been necessarily put off, persuading her to lie down

and try to rest. Sleep was certainly out of the question for the poor child, whose recent desperate attack of typhus fever had left her in a most weak and exhausted state both of body and mind.

Early the next morning they went to the Cloisters, and remained with Mother Angelica till midday, when Maude was despatched with Lilla to the railway station. She was to see her off in the train for Westonbury.

She returned to the Mother, and for two days remained with her and Emily. On the evening of the third day the Superior, thinking all the excitement in the immediate neighbourhood of Wiggins Court would have passed over, sent Maude back with Emily. The poor novice was still in a state of deep despondency, very gentle and quiet, but continually exclaiming, "I wish I could see Etta" (a sister whom she had left at Westonbury); "I wish I could see mamma—where's mother?"—disjointed sentences, showing that she was still far from well.

Maude pitied her much, and tried her best to cheer her, and, when she had persuaded her to go to bed, sat on the floor by her side, talking of the sunny country in which she had been brought up, and of the scenes and associations she loved so much, the poor child often saying, "O let us go home; don't let us stay in this wretched place!"

It was a Saturday night. All had been quiet till about ten o'clock, when Maude, still sitting on the floor by Emily's bed, hoped that she was falling asleep. Suddenly a violent jerk at the door bell. "What's that?" said the novice, starting up. "Nothing, dear, lie down again." Maude went noiselessly

to the top of the little screw staircase. She heard stifled laughter at the door. Yes, it was, as she suspected. some ill-disposed people ringing at the door, to try and frighten them. Then came another ring and a knocking of knuckles against the door ; then stifled laughter in the Court ; then loud whispers through the large keyhole of the door.

Maude was frightened. What if Emily should be thoroughly roused with the noises ? How would she quiet her ? And if the people heard her scream out, would they not make it an excuse to break into the house ? As these thoughts crowded into her mind, she was intensely relieved at recognising the steady tramp of the policeman down the Court, and the going away of the noisy people ; but so soon as he had passed, back they came, and continued the same annoyances. Two or three times he returned, and quiet for the time being was restored.

Emily had been partially aroused, and was so frightened that Maude had the greatest difficulty in keeping her still, and preventing her from screaming out in alarm. Maude had at last resolved that, when the policeman came again, she would open the window, and beg him to remain and prevent the recurrence of the disturbance, as there was a young lady ill in the house ; but, when he did come, her courage failed. What would the Mother say ? And then it was very nearly Sunday morning, when it was to be hoped these disturbances would cease. Would not God take care of them ? Thankful was she when midnight struck, and gradually, towards the morning, the last reveller from the public-house at the entrance of the Court was gone.

It was a place altogether unfit for young women, of whatever class, to be living in alone; and this was now painfully forced on Maude's mind during that night's terrible anxiety. She felt it was not *necessary* that she should pass through such an ordeal in order to be devoted to the poor; that it was a want of judgment on the part of the Mother. Then, too, all those days she had been left quite alone—those fearful hours in the Oratory! True, she could never regret what had ended in her realization of the extreme blessedness of belonging to Jesus.—But the strain that was on her now was telling more than she could well define. Her one idea was to get Emily away from the Court as quickly as possible. Early the next morning they went to the Cloisters, and, leaving the novice in the parlour, Maude entered the inner room, where the Superior was still in bed, and said—

"Mother, I have brought Emily to you, and nothing shall induce me to go to Wiggins Court again."

"Maude, do you know what you are saying?" said Mother Angelica, in the utmost surprise.

"Yes, Mother. After such a night of terror, I feel that it is not right to undergo such an ordeal again."

"Maude, do you know what you are saying?—who you are speaking to?"

But Maude was too deeply occupied with the matter in hand to think of suppressing her opinion. She put the Superior in possession of the occurrences of the night, and said again that Wiggins Court was not a place fit for them to live in.

The Mother evidently saw that she was overstrained, both in mind and body, and changed her

tone to one of great kindness and sympathy. Maude could not suppress her tears, and felt immediately inclined to submission in everything except returning to the Court. Her head ached terribly ; she was only conscious of being in the Superior's room, lying on her bed, and remembered little more of what passed that day.

Sister Ursula was sent for, and for some days they all remained quietly at the Cloisters. The Superior then left, giving orders that they were to spend the days there and the nights in Wiggins Court. As Sister Ursula was with them, Maude made no further protest, and they continued this rule for some little time, till the Mother decided to remove the sisters to another part of the town. It was hard work, however, to persuade Emily to leave the Cloisters. Each evening there was the same difficulty ; and as she was really ill, apparently so weak as to be hardly able to walk, Maude thought it little short of cruelty to insist on her dragging herself along. She suggested to Sister Ursula that they should take a fly, but was reproved for *thinking* even of infringing the rule the Mother had left.

It was Obedience, such as Sister Ursula's, that the Superior had seemed so anxious for Maude to attain—an obedience not only believed in as a cardinal principle of truth, but carried out to the letter in practice, even when opposed alike to common sense and humanity.

## CHAPTER X.

### SELF-ABNEGATION.

NOT long after the events described in our last chapter, the little house in Wiggins Court was given up, and another and much larger one taken in a better part of the town. There had been a great deal of fatigue involved in this change—the searching for houses, the moving in. Most of the pots, pans, the kitchen fender and fire-irons, crockery and oratory adornings, were carried from one house to the other by sisters Mabel and Maude. They engaged a porter with a truck for the heavier things, but the sisters were expected to do any kind of work which might fall in their way that was not absolutely beyond their strength. The Superior's room was hung with white and pink calico; all the other rooms were furnished as at Westonbury. The large drawing-room was to be the oratory, and was given in charge to Maude to furnish according to certain directions.

When the Superior was at the new house, she had one or other of the sisters always in attendance on her, and much conversation passed between them. She had spoken of beginning a hospital in the Cloisters so soon as they could get the whole of the house there, and Maude was especially interested

in forwarding the plan, as she had many sick cases in which she was deeply interested.

One poor man was to be the first candidate for admission, and she gave the Mother Angelica many details about him. Once she was sitting by his bedside when a scripture-reader came in. She would have left at once, but the invalid was so urgent that she should remain; and the reader, seeing her conventual costume, did not miss the opportunity of telling her that a convent was no safeguard against the world: "We carry the world in our hearts, even if we are enclosed in four walls;" and the wooden cross was of no use, "for it is faith in the crucified and risen Redeemer we need."

Maude was, according to rule, silent; but the sick man became very vehement, as he thought this a personal attack on her, and, calling for a prayer-book, pointed out with his trembling fingers where the child was to be signed with the sign of the cross in the baptismal service. He then lay back exhausted, seeming to think he had utterly annihilated the reader's argument. Maude calmed him by saying she was not at all annoyed, but that she must leave him now. She thought how little the scripture-reader knew how entirely she agreed with him, though she failed to see how his words could be applied against the system which she was in. As we have already said, there had as yet arisen no question in her mind as to the truth of the "religious life." On the contrary, she believed that she had an especial vocation for it, but there had been a repose and peace in her spirit lately, which she had been conscious of and rejoiced in, but which she hardly recognized as the

result of the conflict of thought and feeling through which she had passed into a settled faith in Christ, and in consequence of which her mind was undergoing a gradual release from superstition and priest-craft.

The Mother one day gave her a few coloured engravings for her Psalter. She had received some, several months before, with great pleasure. Now, she did not care for them much. The Superior remarked it, and said—

"Why, Maude, you don't seem to care for your pictures."

"O mother, dear, what are they," she replied, taking one up, "nothing but paper and paint!"

Another time, when Maude was speaking of her intense longing for growth in the knowledge of Christ as the actual living risen Redeemer, Mother Angelica warned her of the pride and presumption there was in this intense desire for spiritual things. A "religious" must be humble, and wish for nothing but what God sends in the appointed channels. If only she strove to be more obedient, she would find all the graces of the Holy Spirit increase in her soul. She expressed much affection for her, and seemed always pleased with what she did, though it sometimes struck Maude that she was all the more useful to the Superior from that very deficiency in implicit obedience which Mother Angelica professed to deplore.

She was now again left in the new house, with an orphan servant girl, and she devoted herself to the task of fitting up the Oratory. Hanging the walls with fluted folds of the heavy cloth was difficult, but,

with the help of Kate, she accomplished it. Ordering the stalls was more difficult, for she was not to say what they were for, and having very little idea of measurement, she drew her design on a scale more befitting a church than an Oratory. However, all was arranged at last, and the dark crimson walls, massive stalls, and wooden cross, were considered grand and imposing.

From time to time she was joined by one or another of the community. They came and went according to their private orders, and she seldom knew when or where she would meet them. Sometimes they joined her at the old church, sometimes at home, but no one asked questions. Each went quietly on following her own particular direction, always acknowledging, as Superior, for the time being, the senior sister, whichever she might be.

On one occasion a novice, or "Child" Eldred, joined her. There was something about her appearance which struck Maude as strange. The next morning it was explained by Eldred telling her that she would never know what true self-abnegation was till she followed her example!! She then learned that for six weeks already Eldred had not changed her under garments, and had abstained from all ablutions except washing off the dust from her face and hands. How long this was to be continued she did not say, but she informed Maude that Dr. Oldacre, who was her spiritual father, approved of it, and that she had also taken a vow of celibacy, which he had sanctioned.

The Mother, too, knew and approved of both these vows.

Maude thought immediately of the hermits she had

seen in Italy, especially of one whose cell in the mountains she had visited, and whose appearance and surroundings had particularly revolted her. Could dirt really be pleasing to God? What secret hidden virtue could there be in it which she failed to perceive, but which was evidently apparent to the Mother, Dr. Oldacre, and Eldred? She was puzzled, but there was no time for thinking out impressions then, though certainly she could not *understand* it.

Her work was now almost overwhelming, the new locality being so far removed from the part of the town in which she visited, and she was again left single-handed.

She had a device of her own for finding out the very destitute. She went into an undertaker's, or where they made coffins for a low neighbourhood, and asked if any one had died lately; or into some little general provision shop, and asked if there was not some poor widow in debt to them. She generally got a list at each place. There was one court she occasionally visited where the people were not only in rags, but positively hardly clothed,—the buildings in the most tumble-down state; they never dreamt of going to church. How should they! "But a gentleman comes along every Sunday, and do talk beautiful, and," added the woman, pointing to a chair in the corner, "that is the chair as he sits in up at the top of the court." In this house the staircase was minus several steps, a constant peril for the lodgers' children, one being already crippled by a fall down it; in another room, an old man was laid up from falling through a hole in the ceiling—a well-known hole, but he came upon it "unawares like, in the dark."

Maude often wondered where the responsibility of these and such like calamities rested; at first sight the landlord was to blame; but then, the tenants did not pay their rent. Then she thought of the parish officers, but they seemed always to be small tradespeople, necessarily occupied with their own business.

Then the rags and the drunkenness, and the public houses! it seemed useless sometimes to be trying to make head against such an host of evils, and her thoughts often turned pleasantly to the prospect of the hospital. There, at all events, it would be possible to alleviate pain and give comfort,—and real illness can be helped without fear of being imposed upon.

She remembered those boots and tools which were to enable the father of a family to earn bread, which she had purchased herself, so that the money might not be a temptation to him, passing through his hands. . . . . What good had that expenditure done? enriched the pawnshop-keeper and the publican, and caused a drunken riot in the very family she had tried to help!

That poor young creature in widow's weeds, whose disconsolate appearance had drawn many pence and shillings into her apron as she sat, day after day, on a doorstep!—for whom she had felt so much pity, and had sought out with much trouble—was at home, a brisk young wife, with a tall n'er-do-well husband! —how could they be helped? But then, on the other hand, there was that blind beggar, who said he would have died of his cholera attack, but for the hot brandy and water she had prepared for him; and that old fruitseller in the garret, who had been so

thankful for her help when ill, and near starving. And so Maude went on with her daily visiting, and delighted in arranging and distributing the much larger store of groceries and poor clothes which had been put at her disposal.

During this time a mendicant friar, bare headed and with sandalled feet, called at the door, and after asking various questions as to the community, whether it was an active or a contemplative order, begged its prayers for the speedy return of England into the body of the true church.

One day an elderly sister arrived at Portlyle, who was employed in binding the "Sarum Psalter" as it came from the printers; boards and paper, and various articles were to be procured for this, and Maude had an increase of work. It happened to be very stormy weather, when, after being for many hours in the rain and getting thoroughly wet through, she was really ill; and the sister, being alarmed at the feverish attack, called in a doctor, whose care, combined with a day or two of complete rest, quickly restored her. But the kind old sister told her afterwards that the Mother had reproved her severely for calling in medical advice for so simple an ailment.

But now the scene was again to change: the Superior and Sister Ursula returned to Portlyle, and Maude was dispatched suddenly to another branch of the sisterhood, of the existence of which she had never even heard. The Mother told her she was sending her to join a lay sister, "Susan," who had unavoidably been left too long alone. She was to go and comfort her. "And may all holy angels be with you, my precious child," said the Mother at parting; "and may St. Raphael go with you."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SCENE CHANGES.

MAUDE was now *en route* to Greenshaw. It was a place entirely unknown to her, and, owing to cross trains, she was obliged to make it a two days' journey. The sisters always travelled second class, except when with the Superior; and on this occasion the carriage in which she was, being hooked on unevenly, the jolting from side to side was at one time most alarming, and she fully anticipated an accident. An old gentleman in the same compartment declared he was almost killed, and was quite angry with her for taking the whole thing in so passive a spirit.

At last, shaken and weary, she reached the station nearest Greenshaw, and, finding a boy to act as her guide and carry her box, after a long walk, she came to Fir Cottage, which was the name of the sisters' house.

The little garden in front was filled with large wooden crates, containing carved oak stalls, which had arrived from London to furnish the Oratory; but, as

Susan afterwards told her, were too large to get into the house, so she had to leave them outside—she could see the "beautiful carving through the bars"—and regretted much that they should be left there, but the Superior had, as yet, sent no order about them.

Making her way through these cumbrous packages, she dismissed the boy, and entered the little dwelling-house. She was greeted by the serving sister in a frantic burst of feeling, which for the moment alarmed her.

"O, Sister Maude, you are like an angel from heaven! I am going mad here, left all alone all this time with those horrid rats. I'm nearly out of my mind; I told the Mother I should go mad." And so, between laughing and crying and embracing Maude, poor Susan gave vent to her feelings.

Susan was a good, honest, warm-hearted girl, who had entered the sisterhood against her father's wishes, misled by her self-will, ignorance, and perverted conscience, as well as by her implicit trust in her spiritual guides. She often spoke of her father, to whom she was devotedly attached, and regretted his decided opposition to the "religious life." She had now been left some time completely alone, and the house being an old one was infested with rats, which were her most especial dread and aversion. Maude laughed at her descriptions, and rallied her on her fears. Had she told the Mother?

"O, yes;" she had written again and again, and had never received an answer—no, not so much as a word, till she had a few lines to say that Sister Maude was coming to comfort her. "Indeed," added the poor

girl, "I *would* not have staid here any longer alone, and that I told the Mother. Nothing to do, and living with those horrible rats!"

"Let us go and see the rooms," said Maude. "Where is the Oratory?"

"O, such a lovely Oratory! Sister Mary arranged it—here, upstairs."

Maude followed, and entered in silence and with a low reverence the picturesque little Oratory, with a painted window at one end, and a decorated altar at the other, the walls hung with green cloth, a carpet, and faldstools of the same cloth, beautifully made.

After holding their canonical service, they went over the rest of the house. A room prepared for the Superior was the only one furnished, and that was hung with white and coloured glazed calico, as at Portlyle. The two bedrooms higher up were the same as in Wiggins Court—a mattrass on the ground, and all else in character—but it looked clean and nice; and Susan exultingly exclaimed, "They don't get up here, the horrid creatures."

"Where are these rats?" said Maude, smiling.

"O, all over down stairs. Wait, we must take a stick, and I'll go first," continued Susan, as they descended to the kitchen, with heavy rappings on the stair. It was a miserable little, dark kitchen, with a large fireplace. Some five or six rats scudded away as they entered, and ensconced themselves in several holes near the grate.

"Why, Susan, you should have had these holes stopped."

"O, its of no use, they'd make them again to-

morrow. The man came, and said it was no use. He said it was a complete rat warren, and he wouldn't live here for any money."

However, Maude had the ratcatcher again, and the holes stopped; and, fortunately, having no fears herself, took the initiative with the stick; but the rats seemed to know it was not meant to be used, for they would put their heads out of the holes, even when Maude held it within an inch of them.

"O, Sister Maude, take care, he'll fly at you!" was always poor Susan's exclamation; and, certainly, they did look rather formidable in the morning, when, scrambling out over the scattered contents of the baskets of apples and potatoes, they made for their holes.

There was a small orchard garden at the back of the house all wild and unkept, but yielding a good supply of apples and a few potatoes, which latter Susan dug up with the fire shovel.

Maude's rule of work was quite changed—no visiting, no stores to distribute. Her time was taken up with copying the "Rules" for one of the Oratories, in old English type, and the Daily Offices for the Order of the Holy Ghost for her own Psalter. This, with the canonical hours and morning and evening service in church, filled up her day.

Susan did the house work, and waged a perpetual war, even in silence time, with the rats. The church to which they went was in a neighbouring parish, but they did not know the clergyman. He called once to invite them to a school feast. Maude stood on the threshold; she thanked him, but declined the invitation, and, as she shut the door, she thought how un-

courteous it was not to have asked him to come in, but it was against rule to admit any one within the doors.

Maude had now, over her quiet copying, much time for a mental review of many things which Mother Angelica was doing. She remembered the badges the Superior had shown her lately for the three Orders she had instituted. Each Order had a gilt triangle, and suspended to it, for the Order of the Sacred Heart, was a large red heart with a gilt arrow through it. Maude had thought at the time that it was a far too large and badly executed emblem, and had, in fact, quite disliked it. The three Orders all bound together in the Triangle, symbolized the Trinity by their badges.

The Order to which she belonged was especially dedicated to the Holy Spirit, and round her neck, inside her dress, was the triangle and the cross the Mother had given her. The cross was of metal, black, with silver dove with outstretched wings engraven on it.

Maude felt sometimes perplexed with the multiplicity of "Rules," and "Orders," and varieties of work which the Superior seemed to make and unmake, to set going and to stop, all at her own individual will. She was sincerely attached to Mother Angelica, and looked back on much happy work, but, mingled with this, were many recollections which perplexed her—many things which at the time had made little impression on her from the hurry of her busy life, now came back to her remembrance.

Often she was baffled in her efforts to reconcile certain incongruities and inconsistencies of practice

which recurred to her memory in these quiet hours with singular clearness.

The code of laws drawn up by the Superior had provided against these mental protests with admirable worldly wisdom, by ordering the sisters to banish from their minds any questionings as to the wisdom of any command given them, and reminding them that if they failed in this, they failed to resist a temptation of the devil.

But, notwithstanding these admonitions, Maude found herself almost involuntarily revolving in her mind the question, whether this or that which Mother Angelica had ordered was really the right thing—was anything contrary to the dictates of common sense, not to say humane consideration, to be really looked upon as God's will?

She remembered the events at Portlyle, the bringing Lilla and Emily, both in so nervous and excited a state, to Wiggins Court, poor Emily's delirium and flight; that terrible night when the Mother had sent them back to sleep in the little house, and the people outside had so disturbed and frightened them: was all this wise in the Mother?

Then the asceticism of "Child" Eldred—though there was nothing in the Rules, not even in that of Holy Poverty, to indicate such a vow of self-abnegation, yet the Mother had approved of it; and she remembered how, when she first came to Westonbury, she had been taken to task for being too particular about washing her hands,—was it necessary to be so utterly neglectful of oneself to please God? there must be something which she could not see of holiness in it.

Then this Psalter, in which she was writing, how much poor "Child Freda" had suffered in preparing it for the press! being a novice of the Sacred Heart, her work was principally in-doors. Maude recalled to her memory the time when Freda was all day long employed in this work, copying out, cutting out and pasting in the English Psalms, following the translations from the Latin, which Sister Hilda gave her. Maude remembered the room where "Child Freda" sat, patiently bending over her work, till at last she would start up with the feeling of a sudden rush of blood to her head, or with a sharp pain in the chest, and almost cry; then she would quickly recover herself, and try, with much uncomplaining cheerfulness, to smile away her tears, and resume her weary task. Could it be right to have kept her so shut up from all air and exercise, with scarcely an interval of rest, even granting that she was so devoted to the Superior that she never murmured. Poor Freda! she was a fair, gentle girl, with a young round face and a winning smile,—she was so humble and simple; and Maude remembered that when she was sent to Portlyle on one occasion, she found that Freda, who had been left in Wiggins Court for some days alone, had each day taken in the same amount of bread as when several sister were together, so that she was surrounded with stale loaves. She was so obedient to her rule that she never presumed to judge for herself as to what ought to be done.*

Then as to fasting: some of the sisters had ob-

* Many years afterwards she learned that poor Freda had caught cold from wearing boots which let in water, and died of consumption, sadly neglected to the last.

served the regular fasts with a severity which manifestly injured their health; but was it true that suffering in itself had something purifying and sanctifying, and was acceptable to God? She remembered hearing Sister Monica one day in the recreation room describe the sufferings of a poor woman with a frightfully swelled arm, with whom she had been sitting up the night before. After speaking of the agony this poor creature endured, Monica had added: "Who can doubt that there must be a purgatory to expiate sin; how much this poor woman must have needed expiatory suffering, and those who do not go through what she did in life, must surely have to undergo the purifying after death."

Maude never believed in purgatory, yet she had a kind of belief in the efficacy of mere suffering, and she had often detected in herself the ascetic spirit, which could exult in self-mortification as a supposed sign of saintliness, the eating dry bread, to take her dinner to some poor person, the going without this or that necessary to give it away, and such like small austerities, which she found pleasure in practising when alone at Portlyle. But if voluntary mortification helped to make a soul acceptable to God, where could anyone stop?

From Holy Poverty, self-abnegation like Eldred's, privation of food and rest, it was an easy step to the self-inflicted tortures of the Hindoos. Could these be pleasing in God's sight? Was pain, as such, acceptable to Him?

If so, reasoned Maude, the poor Hindoo fanatic might not be far wrong— perhaps he *had* caught hold of the same grand truth, which must be involved in

the ascetic principle—and that his self-abnegation did really render him acceptable to God?

Who knows if those countless widows, age after age burning on their husbands' funeral piles, were not really winning their way heavenward? For thousands of years this ascetic principle had been developed in heathenism,—could it be the same principle which in the Christian era had been working in the religious life? That worshipper of Juggernaut tearing himself frantically from his friends to throw himself under the wheels of his idol-car—and that holy saint, stepping over her husband and children's prostrate beseeching forms, to enter the convent gates—was it the same spirit animating them? Belief in the virtue of self-abnegation was the constraining motive: each was offering what was thought to be acceptable to the Being worshipped. True, one was sacrificing to an idol, the other to God; but was the principle the same?

Then "Christian Perfection" recurred to Maude's mind. What of that monk with his iron chain? Could it *please* God that he should never look up, never see the trees wave in the golden air, never look into the blue heights above, glorious with starry worlds, till his whole being bowed in adoration and praise to the great Creator of the Universe? And yet, had not the Mother told her that she failed to see the perfection there was in this penance, because she was not sufficiently advanced in the divine life! Surely Mother must be right! There must be a depth of spiritual meaning in it which she was too ignorant to perceive. . . . And Maude went on with her silent copying, mixing the red and blue colours for the

precious stones which studded the sides of her leaves, thinking of the old missal paintings, the monastic occupations, the cloistered meditation, the Trappist silence, the Carmelite austerities, perfectly satisfied with her "religious life," in which she hoped to be led into the perception of all high truth.

Like many others, she had grasped the blessed fact of personal salvation through Christ, without comprehending all that this one central point in Christianity involves. She did not yet see, what was so plain to her in after years, that the ascetic spirit, as developed either in heathenism or nominal Christianity, is a part of man's natural religion. An awakened conscience always cries within us, "Give, give. Pay the debt. Propitiate the offended Deity." And from the moment a man knows that he has done evil, the cry in the conscience is, "Make atonement; get free from sin's penalties." Mortifications may be doubled and trebled, penances increased till they become tortures, but they can never silence or satisfy that insatiable cry in the soul. The body may be macerated, the heart agonized, but none of these things can quiet an awakened conscience.

Is not asceticism, in reality, man's futile attempt to do for himself what God alone could do—make an atonement for sin? God, the just God, and, yet the Justifier of the guilty, *gives* a full and perfect remission of sin to all who come to Him with a conscience sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Man's asceticism wants to give, in order to receive. God gives as a royal giver, without money or without price: even when his son "was a great way off, he ran to him, and

fell on his neck, and kissed him." He gives perfect remission of sin, a conscience perfectly cleansed, and a new principle of sinless life in and through the Redeemer. Then man understands the New Testament standard of simple devotedness to God, the real "religious life," the mortifying, not the limbs and senses, but the corrupt affections of the old sinful nature, keeping it under that the new life may grow in him, taking thankfully all the earthly blessings and enjoyments God so freely gives him, and yet ready, in a trusting, loving spirit, to relinquish them at His call. This "rule" of life, which is wrought in a man's soul in and through the power of the Holy Ghost, is more alien to unbelieving nature than the severest penances and asceticisms performed with a sense of meriting God's favour.

These truths were still, in great measure, hidden from Maude; what she really possessed of spiritual life and intelligence remaining the more undeveloped from the fact of her wilful and blind trust in the system she was in.

In the world, this system was generally understood to have been formed mainly for the purpose of active work among the poor; but in fact the sisters were all taught to look on the contemplative life as the highest one. Maude remembered how Sister Mary moved silently from church to the Oratory, from the Oratory to the refectory, never speaking except when addressed, and then answering in monosyllables, never appearing in the recreation-room, and living entirely secluded, employed, as it was supposed, in meditation, writing, reading, needlework, and prayer.

And this was the highest phase of the religious life.

Maude thought it must be such a very blessed existence. It was to be hers after she had passed through the active order; but there was much work before her before she was to sit, like Mary, at the Lord's feet! Mother Angelica had told her that she intended her eldest child and her youngest (Sister Ursula was the senior sister at that time, in point of precedence, and Maude the last admitted) to be Superiors at some future period, and had always urged upon her the importance of the great rule of Holy Obedience, saying that if once she were as obedient as Sister Ursula, she would be all she could wish.

But it was just this Holy Obedience which had perplexed Maude from the commencement of her "sister" life, and many conversations which she had held with the Mother Superior on this and kindred subjects recurred to her mind in these solitary musings.

She saw how this unquestioning Obedience enabled a vast quantity of work to be done by very few sisters. She thought over what Sisters Monica and Mabel had done in the Industrial Schools and other charities at Westonbury. The amount of work their rule gave them exceeded any that had been put upon her, and she knew that they had often felt tempted to doubt the wisdom of orders given them. She remembered poor Monica, breathless and exhausted, having only just returned from an arduous day's work, finding orders to go off again to a great distance, and her protesting, almost with tears, against such "killing work;" but hastily eating the bread and meat, and drinking the horn of beer, and being off with a parting complaint to Maude (who was with her in the refectory)

about the Mother's never sending for *her*. For weeks she had not seen the Superior, and it was "most unkind." Such a breach of rule was doubtless confessed in the next "Chapter," but these chapter services were few and far between, Maude never having been called to any but the one in which she heard the Mother's address, and saw her give the Rules.

Then the great abbey that was building in Westonbury, from which the different branches of the Sisters of the Holy Communion were to spread all over the world,—all bound together by that mighty link of Holy Obedience—from the mother house at Westonbury all branch houses and subordinate charities would spring. What work would be impossible for those so combined and directed? The Mother had told her that Loyola would not found a female order of Jesuits. Was it not left for her and her children to begin? But, then, this one grand Rule, was it really a principle of *truth—was it of God?*—because on this all must turn.

All this beautiful work of a sisterhood, rising up within the pale of the Church of England like a benignant spirit extending its arms of charity in all directions; schools, orphanages, refuges, hospitals gathered round it; hundreds of active workers sent out to alleviate suffering and instruct the ignorant; and an inner circle of contemplative saints, wholly occupied in meditation and prayer; sisters who, having passed through the active orders, entered the contemplative one, and there formed the central point in the communities, drawing down blessings by their silent prayers on the whole work!

All this fair picture, which to Maude's eye rose as a glorious ideal of Christian perfection, depended on that one cardinal doctrine—*Holy Obedience to the Mother Superior.* She wished so much that she *could* believe in it as Sister Ursula did. The Mother was the Superior, consequently not called on to obey; but what if she had been a sister? Would she have been obedient? "I can obey the Mother," thought Maude, as she sat copying the Rules, "because I have faith in her; but it would be impossible to obey any Superior I thought wanting in common sense. And then, could *I* ever give orders that admitted of no appeal? Without doubting my own wisdom, can it be possible that, as Mother Angelica says, there is a deeper principle of truth involved in this Obedience than I can see? And yet, here I have just written it: 'Ye shall learn, through daily and constant practice, that through the exercise of Holy Obedience, ye will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.' Then I have but to obey, and I shall understand this marvellous secret of power, and wisdom, and strength; for Mother says that to believe in it is not natural, but God's especial gift."

And so the quiet weeks passed quickly away, in the Oratory services—the old English printing—writing the daily rule, which was sent to Westonbury every few days, and kept the Superior *au fait* to what was going on practically and spiritually—and the church goings. Silence rule was rather burdensome, only two being in the house, and Maude was often amused at Susan's delight when she announced that it was "recreation time, and they could hear their own voices." The rats were now somewhat less a topic of discourse, as the ratcatcher had succeeded in ridding

them of many; but it would certainly be far from edifying to hear all the infinitesimal small talk of a "sister." So many rational topics of conversation are out of the range of "religion,"—considered "worldly and secular,"—but poor Susan delighted to hear of the mountain excursions, and books, and foreign sights and scenes which Maude's less fettered conscience allowed her to speak of occasionally, when she felt that relaxation from serious thought was necessary to them both.

One morning, when she had been about a month at Greenshaw, she received the following note from the Superior:—

"My dearest Child,

"I wish you to come to me the day after you receive this, please God.

"I am anxious for you to receive consecration to the life you are called to from the Bishop, before I send you to resume your work (likely to be one of toil and anxiety) at Portlyle.

"But first, dear child, offer yourself in earnest prayer to God, and search into your own heart to see whether you have a faithful, humble, earnest, devoted desire and heart for this work. Faithful and true even unto death, we are likely to see many troubles, poverty, trial, and contempt.

"May God bless you, dearest child,

"In Him,

"Your very affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M.S."

Poor Susan was very nervous at the prospect of being left alone again, but then there was the hope of some one coming in Maude's place; and the Oratory

was to be finished, stalls put in, and a silver lamp to be kept constantly burning, so this would occupy Susan's time and thoughts. And so they parted, never to meet again in this world.

It was a long journey back to Westonbury, and when Maude got out of the train she became suddenly faint, and almost fell. Reaching some bars to lean against, she hesitated whether she had not better take a cab, for the walk home was some distance. But, no! a religious had but to obey — strength would be given—the rule was to walk, and so she nerved herself and went on.

It was after "Compline" when she arrived. No word of greeting from the one or two sisters she saw on her way to the Superior's apartment. She knocked, but, receiving no answer, sat down at the door in patient waiting. She felt ill and tired, and this cold reception, after a long absence of several months, struck her as strange and dismal. She had been many hours without food; she was not hungry, but depressed and exhausted, and her dark solitary half hour at the Superior's door seemed to her unaccountably wretched. At last, Sister Ursula came out of the room with the Superior's supper tray. She looked pleased to see her, and, whispering that the Mother was not well, told her to have some supper and go to bed.

Maude was now very much with Mother Angelica. She was constantly sent for after Compline, and remained till an early hour of the morning with the Superior. The conversations of these days made deep impression on her mind; the Superior unfolded to her more fully the aims and objects of the Sisterhood, its Loyola-like organization, and the difficulties connected with its establishment.

One of the greatest of these was the suspicion with which the clergy regarded them. She said that they were beyond measure displeased because she would not allow her schools to be interfered with, or her children treated as district visitors—that though the sisters were in all places, and in all outer work, among the poor, still the clergy must learn that they were not seculars—they must be taught to regard the sanctity of the religious life—that this hostility of the seculars to the regulars had been the case in all ages of the Church—these persecutions were the sign of the Cross upon the work—she would not have felt so safe but for the great opposition they met. Philip of Westshire was almost the only Bishop faithful to the Anglican Church. The whole fate of the Society at one time had rested on his firmness and decision; the puritan clergy sent him such strong appeals, that she had great difficulty in placing things in their proper light even to him—that writing would not do, it was always necessary to see him—if he had not held firm, there would have been no hope.

On one occasion, when Maude spoke of some of the Protestant doctrines she had heard in the old church, at Portlyle, questioning if they might not be true, the Mother took her to task as not speaking as became a devoted child of her most deeply-wronged but precious Mother Church. She told her that the Church was full of heretics and heretical teachers; but that she should treat any question as to the purity of the Holy Church as one would a question as to the purity of one's mother. That it was awful to think of the pride and presumption that was at work in the questioning of God's sacred truth in these days of most deep peril to precious Mother Church!

Speaking of miracles one day, Maude said, "But, Mother dear, could it be a *real* miracle that of St. Januarius at Naples? At the time I saw it, I thought how awful was the position of those priests before God if it were a lie they were acting." The Mother replied, "My child, I believe that in different communions, and for different purposes, God permits miraculous manifestations of His power, and it would be unwarrantable to judge of what was false or true where there is such manifestation. In our Anglo-Catholic communion we have no such manifestation. Then, too, my child, it may please God often to grant to a greater degree of faith more visible manifestations. Go to that cupboard, dear child. Stay! I will go myself."

She went, and brought out a spoon which seemed to be of gold. "Maude, this spoon was the one used by Mr. Pritchard in administering Holy Communion to Lilla in her illness, when we thought she was dying. There being no silver spoon here, he went out and bought this, which was the first little silver spoon he could get. And now see, my child, it looks like gold, does it not?"

Maude examined it in the Mother's hands. It certainly did seem to have changed colour. It struck her that the spoon, not having been wiped after the communion, was tarnished. She said so. Mother Angelica replaced it in the cupboard without reply. It flashed into Maude's mind that her credulity was being put to the test, but the subject was not again referred to. There was a great deal of conversation about the hospital at Portlyle, which Maude was to open immediately after her consecration by the Bishop; but this consecration was for the present delayed. In

the meanwhile several members of Maude's family came to see her, and they urged upon her the duty of returning to her mother.

She told one of her brothers, who was very much distressed at her continued separation from all her relations, that she could not think it right to leave the work she was engaged in unless her mother absolutely ordered it; that when she first came to Westonbury, and had an interview with the Bishop, who told her he came to see her at her mother's request, she was afraid that he was going to persuade her to return home; but he said that it was an important work she was engaged in, and good for her soul; and that so long as Lady Deerswood consented to her remaining, she might stay: but that a mother's claims on her child were sacred, and that she must remember that she was bound to return, whenever her mother commanded it. It was a great pleasure to Maude seeing these relations; but mixed with much distress, as she knew how unnatural and unfeeling it appeared, her resisting all argument to return home with them.

A few days after they were gone she was laid up with a severe attack of illness; the Superior, who was herself ill, sent a physician to see her several times; but he was little aware of how much his patient suffered from the want of care and nursing. She was left for whole days almost entirely alone; but she knew that, though her recovery was retarded in consequence of such neglect, yet that there was so much press of work in the sisterhood, it could not be helped. It sometimes struck her as strange that, when ill, the sisters were left as it were to get well as they best could; she missed the kind care of the old

sister who had acted on her own responsibility at Portlyle. Now she would have given anything to have had a sister with her; however, a religious should wish for nothing but what the Superior orders, and, after all, she had that which was considered essential—a doctor and medicine.

She was recovering from this illness, when she one morning received a note from the Superior, enclosing a letter from her mother, with directions how it was to be answered. It was no unusual thing to receive letters already opened; but Maude felt at once that she could not answer her mother according to the Superior's orders.

Lady Deerswood's letter was very short; it simply *commanded* her daughter to return to her on a specific day, and Maude saw in a moment how much it had cost her mother to write such an authoritative summons. The Superior's permitted reply was to the effect that she was to say that Maude could give no answer till the Mother had written, which she was not able to do at present, being ill. But she wrote her own answer, saying that she would not fail to come; though, under any other circumstances, she would have asked for a delay in her return, as there was so much to be done in the sisterhood just then.

This she enclosed to the Mother Superior, telling her the reason why she could not write as directed. The letter was sent back to her to re-write, accompanied with a sharp rebuke for her disobedience. She did re-write it; but in much the same way, at the same time again telling Mother Angelica how sorry she was not to be able to obey her. She did not again hear from the Superior, but was left for several

days under the disagreeable sense of her displeasure. Being now convalescent, she followed the general rules of the community, and saw something of the sisters and novices in recreation time. She found that many new rules and regulations had been enjoined during her absence from Westonbury: the novices were under much stricter discipline; silence rules were most strictly enforced. She was much struck, too, with the inefficiency of the strength of the community for the amount of work undertaken.

She was now again summoned to the Superior. Maude found her in her private Oratory, one in which she had not been before, and the Superior was seated in an abbess's chair. Kneeling down by her side Maude was taking her hand, but it was withdrawn, and Mother Angelica asked her why she had not obeyed her.

"Dearest Mother, I *could* not write to mamma in any other way. I know well what it was for her to *command* my return; but you must not think me wanting in obedience to you."

Much conversation ensued; the Mother did not now withdraw her hand which Maude was holding and kissing; the old subject of obedience was discussed, and the Superior said: "You should have allowed *me* to direct and guide you entirely in this matter, that you might return to your mother *sent* by me; and I am most anxious you should have consecration from the Bishop before you return. You know, my child, that believing in the principle of Holy Obedience is a grace of God, the conviction comes in the practice." After dwelling much on the grace and power there was in *obeying*, the Superior, placing her hand on the head

of Maude, who was still kneeling by her side, said: "My child, when you hear me speak, you should think it is the voice of Jesus Christ."

Maude started involuntarily, and looked up into the Mother's face, as if for explanation of what at the moment struck her as altogether wrong. The Superior rose, and, giving her the accustomed blessing, left the Oratory without speaking; perhaps she, too, had some misgiving as to the nature of that assumption of authority! No reference was ever made to the subject again, and Maude hardly analysed her feelings of surprise and protest at this claim of Divine infallibility. Her love and affectionate reverence for the Superior seemed to forbid any doubt as to her proceedings; but she was sensible of a certain mental barrier having arisen between them, and she was certain that she was right in her endeavours not to be prevented being with her mother on the day appointed; but it was only at the last moment, and when they were actually in the train—*en route* to the Bishop's palace—that the Superior relinquished the idea of detaining her for the consecration. They parted in the carriage, the Mother embracing and blessing her, with a hopeful prediction that her "precious child" would soon return to her, and regretting that she could not take her now with the other two sisters to the Bishop. The train rolled on, carrying Maude (with her Psalter in her hand, her triangle and cross round her neck, and the Rule of Holy Obedience on her conscience), to her own mother, from whom she had been separated for more than a year.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MAUDE AT HOME.

LADY Deerswood was in London, where it happened that many members of the family were at this time staying. All were glad that her mother's firm command had brought Maude amongst them again. She was welcomed most affectionately, though her mother was shocked at her appearance, and the next day protested against the coarse grey dress (which had now been worn daily for months), the conventual sleeves, the gloveless hands, cropped hair, peculiar black bonnet, and the black girdle and cross. Maude was thankful that her mother was not cognisant of the gilt triangle and cross she wore within her dress!

By what right, argued Lady Deerswood, had Miss Melton (the name by which Mother Angelica was known in the world) sent her daughter home dressed in such an extraordinary way? She looked even more peculiar than a Roman Catholic nun. Her daughter did not belong to her establishment. She had only permitted her to go there on a visit for three months, and she had staid a year without her consent. It was impossible to tolerate so dirty and neglected an appearance. Maude might be as simple and plain in her dress as she liked, but her mother insisted on an immediate change of the Westonbury costume.

What was to be done? Maude knew that she must consider her dress sacred; and yet she could not but see that she ought so far to concede to her mother's wishes as to have it clean. One of her brothers (the same who had persuaded Lady Deerswood to *command* his sister's return) urged upon her the positive duty of getting this done without delay; and hurrying her off to a large mourning shop, she appeared, in a few days, in a costume similar to her former one, but of finer grey wool.

Lady Deerswood, glad that her daughter had so far shown a wish to please her, made no farther immediate protest against the conventual garments, but there were daily practical difficulties, arising from the false position in the which she found herself placed, and from the clashing of the family life at home with the Westonbury Rule, which rendered Maude's days at this time very unhappy. She wrote daily to Mother Angelica; and, as she was acting in all sincerity, according to the dictates of her judgment and conscience, she was quite unprepared for the following letter:—

"My dearest Child,

"I fear there is more excitement and unreality in your letter than you are at all aware of. Your idea of the religious life, or at least your practice of it, is considerably lowered. What do you mean, my dear child, by saying you hope to be happy in your change of work? It is an unreal expression. What bodily toil or suffering are you enduring? You are living in luxury and affluence, and you have changed your coarse religious garments, which were to have been a witness against the luxuriousness of the world, be-

cause you did not know that God would carry you through this, and a great deal more, and make your mother's will bow to His will.

"Satan is tempting you. You love luxuriousness, you love ease of body, you love to be with your relations, and to please them, and Satan is blinding you, though you do not know it.

"Pray to God to make you humble, self-sacrificing, and obedient, to make you love mortifications, and to open your eyes to self deception. Pray Him to give you a deeper reverence for the religious life, and not to presume to judge for yourself how far you may conform to the world.

"I hope you continue to rise early. I hope you are simple in your food. I hope you do not allow yourself to be waited upon in your bedroom, and that you make your own bed.

"I hope, too, that you are religiously exact in keeping the canonical hours and saying the morning and evening service. May God bless you, dear child, and give you a deep and true spirit of humility, and a love and reverence for the religious life and its threefold practice of Obedience, Poverty, and Purity.

"In Him,

"Your very affectionate, but deeply sorrowing, Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

"Remember that 'faith,' not expediency, is the motto of the religious life; God will bring all things right, even the hardest and most impossible. If your mother had sent you away in anger, God would have permitted it to try your faith and obedience; but He would have caused her to meet you again in love.

But you are walking by *sight* and not by *faith* now; neither are you thinking *first*, but secondly, of the religious life and its holy calling, though perhaps you will not allow this to yourself: 'Whoso loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me. Whosoever is ashamed of confessing Me before men, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of the Father with all the holy angels.' 'The foxes have holes,' &c. Study prayerfully these texts, and learn, above all things, *first* to cleave to and reverence your vocation,—to despise the world,—and to live in poverty, humiliation, and self-abnegation. God bless you, child of my love! if you think me severe, it is the severity which would pluck you from destruction. You are dreaming yourself; you speak of 'stern trial,' and of change of work: whereas, the real truth is that you left *not* in the spirit of Holy Obedience and Humility, but in a spirit of self-confidence in having made a right decision, which you ought to have left to your Superior to have made for you, that you might have gone forth in the strength of Holy Obedience; and you have given up to the feelings of others all which you could give up, if you even hoped to be allowed by me to retain the vocation and dignity of Grey Sister, of which, alas! you have proved yourself unworthy. You have also returned to a luxuriousness which is not consistent with your calling and profession."

This letter made Maude very unhappy; on the one hand she had a conviction that she had acted rightly, she could not have conceded less to her mother; on the other, could Mother Angelica be wrong? Even to doubt her was a temptation of the evil one—and yet

common sense would be heard;—but then she had great affection for the Superior, and wrote most penitent letters, stating exactly the conflicting state of her mind; she received no answers, but continued to write,—for her perplexities were daily increasing, her rule placing her frequently in direct opposition to Lady Deerswood's wishes and arrangements, and she felt painfully that she was acting untruthfully to her mother, who did not know of her actual admission into the Society, and who was in utter ignorance of the Rules and Promise of Obedience which bound her. The next note she received from Portlyle was from Sister Ursula, in answer to one of her letters to the Superior, asking if she might go and stay with her sister Mrs. Rivers.

"My very dear Sister,

"A wee line, which Mother bids me write you, to tell you that you must not leave your mother to stay with any one. You went away to be with her, and so you must only stay with her, and no one else. Thank you much for your little note. I do think of you, dear; write to me again. Prince Hal's purses are coming to you, from your very

"Affectionately loving

"SISTER URSULA, S.H.C."*

And again:

"Very dear Sister,

"Mother bids me write and tell you to write to the man at Portlyle from whom you ordered the beds for the hospital, and ask whether the order is executed, and send the letter,—we do not know where

* Sister of the Holy Communion.

he lives. *Our* great Festival is coming; oh, how I wish you were with us, or at least that you were in our corner of the Triangle at work! and then it is very hard to think of you away; because I know that those given to God *cannot* be happy in the world,—at least their happiness must be of a passive not an *active* kind,—though, of course, peace and rest there may be, in God's will, everywhere; still the hardness and roughness, which is the precious portion of His life, is difficult in the world to hold in remembrance and to practise, and we have taken those on us so especially as part of His 'weariness and painfulness' in His own most holy life; but, oh, how little a part, and with what little love borne, are ours when we look at *those*! I have little time for writing this, darling, having sundry things on my hands waiting to be done.

"Ever y^r^ own affectionate

"SISTER URSULA, S.H.C."

Maude now heard again from Mother Angelica:—

"My dearest Child,

"As long as you allow yourself so contentedly to be blinded by the delusion that I am finding fault with you for obedience to your mother, you may well think that I must consider it useless to write to you. What I warn you against is the evil spirit of self-will and presumption in following your own judgment directly there was an opportunity for doing so, and of blindness to the snares which are laid around you.

"You have done wrong, dearest child. Do not let Satan and your own sins of pride blind you to it.

"You must go to Jesus, and bow yourself before Him, and say, 'Heart of Jesus, our Peace and

Reconciliation, kindle in my heart the fire of Divine love.'

"May God have mercy on you.

"In Him, y^r^ affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Y^r^ M. S."

This letter enclosed one from Sister Ursula:—

"Dearest, very dear Sister,

"On a joyful festival I have Mother's permission to write you a few lines,—parted from us all in body, yet near in spirit. Do write to me and tell me how you get on amid the waves of the troublesome world; you have a little cord, though, which will hold you fast, if but you are true to it. You are in truth in a position of much trust: for have you not the dignity of the 'Religious Life' to uphold, and that is a great trust and a very precious one: for, oh, what a great gift has God given to you and to me, and we must spend it to the *uttermost* for Him, each in our way, lest at the great day we be found wanting. I do desire so much for you, my own dear sister, that you should be strong in that strength which is our especial portion—the *Strength of Obedience.* I am sure you *will* find that your *rest*, in the midst of hours of pain from the thought of giving pain to others, or from the words and looks which betray it to you, and which *must* be the share of every one to whom God has given that peculiar privilege of being in their manner likened to their Lord, by leaving father, mother, or brethren, or sisters to follow His call, the call of God, to live for Him alone, to win the souls of others! Is it not indeed worth any bitter pangs, even the cold, dead feeling which the pain of other hearts gives to our own, so to bear the Cross with Him, and to have His

mark outwardly even in little things? *How* little, when compared to the glorious prize beyond. Our dearest mother is very ill to-day; you can imagine, too, what she is feeling for her child parted from her, and how anxiety and love for her soul must add another thorn to the many which so often press into her heart. Mary is come back so very joyful to be at home once more. I doubt not you are joining with us morning by morning when the Precious Presence of our Lord is given to us. Surely He will feed your soul too, though all seems to you but a dry and barren land, where no water is.

"Ever your own loving Sister,

"URSULA, S.H.C."

Maude was always anxious to secure her letters, and read them in the solitude of her own room, for Lady Deerswood was much displeased at letters arriving from Westonbury addressed to her daughter as "The Sister Maude;" and Maude herself was constantly finding that she was involved in double dealing, as she tried to represent the sisterhood as the simply charitable and benevolent association the Superior wished it to appear in the eyes of the world. Of all that concerned the inner life of the community, her rule forbade her to speak.

Again, it often struck her as a real untruth, to say that every thing at Westonbury was carried on in the spirit of the Church of England, to which her mother belonged, when she knew that Lady Deerswood held the Reformation truths, which Anglicans repudiated as heresies. If her mother only knew the real state of the case!—how Protestants were stigmatised as heretics!—and the Roman Catholic doctrines protested against

at the Reformation were held to be the true teaching of England's Established Church! Certainly, Lady Deerswood might justly feel herself deceived should she learn this; and Maude became daily more aware of the false position in which she was placed. "Better far," she thought, "be openly in the Roman Catholic Church, and one's vocation as a 'religious' recognized in the family, as well as in the community; but this double dealing cannot be right. God's truth must be able to stand without all these Jesuitical disguises."

She felt the force of what Sister Ursula wrote about Obedience. This would, indeed, have been her rest, could she have blindly submitted all thought, all responsibility of right and wrong, and simply obeyed Mother Angelica;—but then, had she been "obedient," she would have written the undutifully evasive letter the Superior ordered her to write in answer to her mother's direct command to return home, and Lady Deerswood would have had the bitter pang of thinking that it was useless to appeal to her daughter's filial love and obedience.

No! Maude could not but be sure that she had acted rightly, though she hardly dare yet acknowledge to herself that Mother Angelica was wrong. She could not, indeed, hold to the cord Sister Ursula recommended, but she was clinging to a far safer one, for it was never woven by human mind. Her firm belief in her individual responsibility to God was leading her continually to seek guidance from Him alone;—those terrible hours of conviction of sin, and recognition of the Saviour in the solitude of the dreary little house at Portlyle, had worked in her soul an absolute faith in Christ and in the truth of the Holy Scriptures.

Slowly, and with faltering steps, was she beginning to recognize the new life and liberty she stood in as a believer, and prayerfully did she seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in her study of God's Word—that He would take of the things of Christ, and show them to her; but it remained for Mother Angelica's own letters to enlighten her mind as to the falseness of the Westonbury system.

The Superior's next letter was as follows:—

"My dearest Child,

"You should pray to God, and you should strive earnestly to be obedient and humble; and when two persons to whom you owe obedience differ, as you think, you should ask what you are to do, and not act rashly on your own ideas.

"I blamed you, not so much for making your own determination on your mother's letter, as I did for the spirit in which it was done; and for the second thing for which I blamed you, that was obviously clear to any person of knowledge. No person who belongs to any society, secular or religious, has a right to change anything of the society (such as dress, or anything else) without permission from the Superior of that society. It is the commonest principle of rule and obedience, and order and discipline, acknowledged even in the world. Your mother herself, had you laid the matter simply before her, has too good a knowledge of these things not to see that it would but have been a common mark of respect to have asked if you could or could not alter the dress of the society into which you had been admitted a member.

"But it was not these mistakes or these ignorances about which I am anxious. These may have been

outwardly but a want of outward respect towards myself; but, my dearest child, what I am anxious about, and have been from the first moment when it began to be shown, was the wrong spirit which dictated it, and which is now covering simple things under the garb of impossibilities—impossible they may be to pride, but not impossible to love and humility, and simplicity and obedience. It is the spirit in which, unconsciously, you write to me a letter assuming things which are not true—full of ignorance. Yes, that is my comfort, my child; you know not what you write.

"It is impossible for me at length, dear child, to answer this letter, except in speaking, because I am greatly invalided by a late severe illness. I also feel that, though it is my happy duty to teach you, yet that you write more in a tone of confident argument, as if what you write you knew well to be true, whereas you make great mistakes on both sides; and I feel, my child, that you must be good, and humble, and gentle, before it would be of use to show you the mistakes you have made.

"Satan has been setting before you lies, and you have believed them.

"If you will write humbly, and gently, and quietly, the practical difficulties which you meet with, I will teach you; but if you listen to Satan, and write in a proud, doubting, self-confident spirit, I cannot teach you.

"I cannot imagine but that your pride is concealing a great deal from you, dear child.

"May God bless you.

"In Him,

"Your very affectionate Mother,

"*Turn over.* "ANGELICA, Yr M.S.

"If you ever believed anything I ever said, believe this, dear child, that you have mistaken, and are deceived in, the nature of the principle which perplexes you (Holy Obedience), and in my wishes and views regarding you. If you can take, in simplicity, and humility, and sincerity, what I teach you, my own child, God may have mercy on you under this temptation, and He may have mercy on me, too, lest I suffer beyond measure in your loss.

"It pains me to write it, dearest child, but you constrain me to do so. Does it never occur to you that, putting aside the sacred claims of your society, you yet left me in a selfish way? You know that though it is a duty to obey a parent in the Lord, yet no parent who loved you, as I am sure Lady Deerswood does, would wish you to do what was wrong; and it was wrong, inconsiderate, and selfish, though you did not mean it, to leave me as you did. Now, had you asked me about it, this would not have rested on you, for I should have told you to go, and then you would have been relieved of the charge of want of considerateness. You must reflect, my child, that family ties are not the only ties. Men do not think so even in the affairs of the world. They would not, and could not, even at the command of a parent, avoid their allegiance to an admiral or a general. Nothing in the world could be effected if private interests and private families were first thought of. But you ought to see me, dear child, for I am too ill to teach you by letter.

"You must tell your mother that I am ill, and desire greatly to see you; and if she or you think that you are anything to me, you must come."

Maude was much troubled with the evident grief of the Superior at what she considered wrong in her dear child's conduct, and yet it was difficult to understand this letter. She pondered long over it. Was it possible that, after all, she had mistaken the Superior's principles and views, and that Mother Angelica would not have objected to her telling Lady Deerswood of the Admission Service, the Promise of Obedience, and the Rules, and that her mother, then, would at once have seen that she had no right to interfere with her dress, or anything else, without first procuring the Superior's consent? Was being at Westonbury like belonging to the army or navy? Had Mother Angelica the authority of an admiral or general? She wrote, certainly, as if the society had the same claim on the world's consideration; but if so, why were not the Westonbury Rules all open and straightforwardly given to the world. Every one knew the rules binding the clergy, the magistrates, the army, the navy. This was certainly puzzling! However, one thing was clear to Maude—the Superior was most anxious to see her, and she must try and get permission to go to her.

Mrs. Rivers was at this time staying with her mother; and when Maude spoke to her of this letter, and asked her to persuade Lady Deerswood to let her go at once to Portlyle, if only for a few days, she took the opportunity of eliciting some information from her sister as to the real state of affairs at Westonbury. Maude told her of her Admission and of her Promise of Obedience to the Superior. Mrs. Rivers could not conceal her indignation at the double dealing which was now apparent to her! Could it be

possible that Miss Melton had bound her sister to a conventual system, when only a few weeks ago she had written to urge Lady Deerswood not to remove her from Westonbury, for fear of her falling under Roman Catholic influences!

She saw the reason of the Superior's anxiety to recall Maude, and she endeavoured to open her sister's eyes to the deceitfulness of the system she was in. She brought her Miss Melton's letter to her mother, which Maude read in the quiet of her own room, deeming it almost sacrilege to read a letter of the Mother Superior's not intended for her eye. It was as follows:—

"My dear Madam,

"Your daughter Maude has sent me your last letter to her. I have not yet seen her, being confined to my room through illness; neither should I wish her to know the subject of this present letter to you, unless you especially desire it, while at the same time it is a duty to you, to her, and to myself, to write to you, though a very painful one.

"When your daughter first came to me, it was from herself, and for the first time, that I learned the unsettled state of her mind. She came, as she told me, from being on the very point of entering a Romish convent, and still very much inclined to do so. I found, too, that the fear of her doing so, and the knowledge of her state of mind, had induced you to permit her to come here, in the hope, as I suppose, that she might reconsider the errors she had been led into half adopting. Had I been aware of this, I should have justly hesitated in receiving Maude. I am no controversialist. I understand little or nothing

of the unhappy disputes and dissensions now existing, and having a sincere reverence for, and a deep attachment to, the British Church, I confess I should decline receiving the assistance, or becoming responsible in any way for those whose hearts lean towards a foreign communion, or who (worse still) are tempted to judge falsely the church to which they have the privilege to belong.

"I could not, however, send Maude away from me, as she was now actually under my roof, unless she exhibited a determined unfaithfulness to our Holy Church, which I thank God she has not done, though I must own that I have felt an increasing anxiety about her. I have endeavoured to keep from her all controversial reading or conversation of any kind, feeling sure that controversy—in which I find she had deeply engaged before she came to me—on subjects too high for us, is more apt to mislead than to convince.

"But I am not satisfied; though I consider her mind steadfast at present, yet I am persuaded that a very little might unsettle her. I think that being thrown out of this course of life and discipline *will* tend to do so, and it is with the most extreme anxiety I should see her leave me, for her sake. I should feel it deeply were she again unsettled; and I should also feel it, well knowing the very deep injury it would be to me and the work in which I am engaged, if it were so, and if she fell into the snares which the Roman Catholics are spreading everywhere.

"I am sure, my dear Madam, that your sense of justice will readily lead you to pardon the freedom with which I write. You allowed your daughter to come to me, because you feared her leaving you in a

worse direction. I have done my best for her; and now, in my turn, I am afraid of her doing herself and me an injury, if you remove her from the life here before I can feel satisfied that it is safe for her to leave. Moreover, though she is quiet, calm, and steadfast now, I do not believe she is yet strong enough to resist the temptations to which such a mind as hers will be exposed when she is removed from her present pursuits, and again thrown into the conversation and society which may unsettle her in these days when the favourite subject of controversy is unhappily so common a theme of discourse.

"I write from my bed, and fear I am not expressing myself altogether as plainly as I ought.

"Believe me,

"Dear Madam,

"Yours faithfully,

"ANGELICA MELTON, M.S."

Maude sat long with this letter in her hand. The rule of Holy Obedience relaxed its hold altogether on her mind, and she was left at liberty to think out various recollections and impressions which had always been struggled with as they arose. Could deception such as this be justifiable? Could God, the God of all truth, be served by falsehood? For the first time she seemed to realize fully the false nature of the Jesuitical principles she had accepted—everything seemed so full of deception at Westonbury! Why should not all be clear, and transparent, and above board, if it was godly and true? Was it fair or just that her mother should be so deceived? Could she ask her to let her go to Portlyle now, when, if she consented, it would be in utter ignorance of the conventual yoke

which the Mother Superior desired to rivet more securely on her, Maude's, neck. Surely the Roman Church was right in separating its "religious" entirely from home ties and duties. How could she honour and obey her own mother in the daily domestic and social life at home, and at the same time be secretly bound to the rule of a community and to the arbitrary will of the Mother Superior? Would it not be far more honest and true to tell her mother at once that she had entered the religious life—was bound to it—and must be allowed to return to its duties in entire obedience to her Superior? But then, could she ever accept this principle of Holy Obedience? Could she ever again even have implicit faith in Mother Angelica? —above all, could she dare banish from her mind the doubts which were arising as to the truth of the religious life itself? Could it be that there was a true, blessed life, in which, as a Believer in Christ, she was actually placed by God, of which the religious life system was a marvellously-devised "*counterfeit?*"

Those who by God's grace have earnestly followed on in search of truth, battling for every inch of true ground against the deceitfulness of their own heart, the delusions and wilfulness of their mind, and the suggestions of the enemy, in his various disguises as an angel of light, will understand what a long and weary strife was going on in Maude's soul. We will only briefly sketch the tenour of her thoughts by giving one or two notes she wrote at that time on the back of a letter she had just received from Westonbury.

"There must be sin in throwing all reason aside, and placing the responsibility of our soul in the hands of a Superior, be she the most perfect."

"There must be some marvellous fallacy in the system, that puts into the mouth of an individual man or woman the words, 'When you hear me speak, you should think it is the voice of Jesus Christ.'

"There must be untruth in a system that advocates the doing evil that good may come. There must be evil in the belief that, if done in the spirit of Holy Obedience to a Superior, a direct breaking of God's command may become a meritorious action."

But though the religious life, with its perfect counterfeiting of all the graces of a Christian's risen life in Christ, was losing its power over Maude's spiritual understanding and quickened conscience, yet her affections and sympathies were deeply involved in the Sisterhood at Westonbury; and she was often tempted to shut her eyes again, and become more deluded than ever. She saw in after life how mercifully she had been kept by God's grace from yielding to the influence of such a letter as the following from Sister Ursula, to whom she wrote of her new doubts and difficulties:—

"My very dear Sister,

"Your letter has given me great pain, on your account; I do, indeed, tremble for your soul's sake. You say, Satan can transform himself into an angel of light; but, oh! one could see him in his form of darkness, helping you to trace some of those words you have written to me! You are under a strong temptation, most palpable to others, but you see it not, or will not allow it to yourself to be such. You have not courage to look it in the face, and bid him, in the name of the Lord, depart. You are like one who has drunk deeply of a sweet, poisoned cup, but

not sufficiently to be yet wholly unconscious of his danger; and one is standing by offering the jewelled vessel again and again, and setting forth the richness and sweetness of the liquid and the reasonableness of quenching a natural thirst, that the poor, ensnared, dazzled victim may lose all remembrance, so plain to him once, that *death* is in it. This is what Satan would do by you now—would that you could see your peril! Think of the solemn words of our Lord, when the disciple would go bid farewell to those at his house: 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' 'Let the dead bury their dead, but go THOU and preach the kingdom of God.' This is no question with you really concerning the right and wrong of the religious life. You cannot read our Lord's words, and deny His Voice in your conscience, and not know that He had called you to it. Satan would make you think that it is. This is one of his artifices to blind your soul to the fact that the real struggle to you is *between* living for and amid the sweet, the precious affections of relatives and home, and leading a life of self-denial and self-subdual, and work for your Lord for the souls and bodies of His members—yea, for *Himself*. Oh! dearest, can you bear to lay yourself at His feet, and, with closed eyes, bring Him present to you hanging in His agony on His bitter cross, and cast Him away from you? For it *is* rejecting Him: for does He not call us to walk in His suffering steps, and has He not called you in an especial manner to this blessed privilege? You CANNOT look at Him, and choose a life of ease and human love—you cannot cast away that precious life of entire devotion, and

spending of yourself for Him, to which you are bound by sacred and solemn ties, and not deeply injure your soul, nay, peril its eternal salvation!

"Do you not remember how we read of one of His favoured children, to whom our Lord showed in a vision the place among the lost which was prepared for her if she had not followed His call to lead the religious life? That dreadful sight she never forgot. You must not—oh! you must not, indeed—blind yourself to this, that you *are* choosing between the love of your relations and the love of your Lord (for you cannot deny His voice of love in your soul to be wholly His, and that when you have no right to choose for yourself, inasmuch as you have given yourself to the devoted life, and taken it as your portion and are bound to it) lest—I cannot bear to think of the future if you prove faithless to Him and it! You *must* boldly defy Satan in his alluring garb of fair words. Do not parley, or think you can be safe in any middle course; but, in the strength of your Lord, say to him, get thee hence. You will not deny the cross of pain—you will never be happy in a worldly life (though who knows where the yielding to one strong temptation drags down the soul, perhaps even to seek its pleasures again?), or, if you are happy (in God's displeasure), one trembles to think of the suffering you are preparing for yourself, or, it may be, that it would come to you through these very dear ones whom you have put in the place of God in your heart.

"It seems to one so fearfully, that it must be through a fiery trial that a soul could be saved which had denied the Cross of its Lord—had drawn back from the high estate to which it had in His love been chosen.

"Oh, dearest, I speak as to one whom I love much, very much!—would that you could look stedfastly and with earnest prayer at your soul's present danger. You *must* make up your mind to give pain to your relations. You must act with courage, and faith, and trust, if you would live as conscience tells you is God's will for you. Where would be the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of Martyrs of old, *if they* had lived for home and relations? And yet how many of them had, it may be, a less call than you have now to give account for!

"With a sorrowful, anxious heart,

"Your very affectionate Sister in the Lord,

"URSULA, S.H.C."

This letter was calculated to have made a deep impression on Maude, had she been less thoroughly certain of the integrity of her convictions. She felt all the sincerity of Sister Ursula's appeal; but it only made her the more deeply examine the principles in which Ursula still believed, and in which she was losing faith.

Maude had taken her sister, Mrs. Rivers, partially into her confidence since she had read the Superior's letter to her mother, and from time to time she communicated to her some of her correspondence with Westonbury. Mrs. Rivers, with great judgment, and most loving consideration, refrained from pressing her into any revelations; but did her utmost to open her eyes to the double-dealing in which the Superior of Westonbury had involved herself, and her community, and in which she was evidently trying to retain her.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SPELL BROKEN.

MAUDE had answered the Superior's appeal to her to come to Portlyle, by saying that she could not ask her mother to let her go to her under present circumstances; that she felt acutely the false position in which she was placed; that if she returned to Mother Angelica, it must be in entire obedience to her, in full acceptation of the principle of Holy Obedience. If she remained at home, she must be left free to perform the duties devolving upon her in obedience and love to her own mother. She did not allude to the letter of the Superior's to Lady Deerswood, which Mrs. Rivers had shown her, nor of the doubts arising in her mind, of which she had written fully to Sister Ursula.

She received the following reply from Mother Angelica:—

"My dearest Child,

"I think you are not aware what violent letters you have written. You have misunderstood me, and you must continue to misunderstand until you are gentle. You think that I am finding fault with you for obedience to your mother. I am not doing so

What I am anxious about is your soul, and what I am caring about is not the acts you have done, but the spirit and the way in which they have been done. Thus, I warned you of *the way* in which you had returned to your mother; but if you pause quietly to think, you will know very well that I should have wished you, and did wish you, to obey that command. You know, also, that though I was exceedingly anxious for you to have the Bishop's blessing, I yet refused to detain you those few hours longer, when, on looking at your mother's letter, I saw the wording of it.

"About your dress, also, I do not by any means say that you ought not to have obeyed your mother; but I *do* say, that as it was an outward regulation affecting the Society, it would have been right of you to have represented to her that you ought to communicate with me about it. Had I *refused*, it might then have been a question between the obedience to your mother and myself. You had no right to suppose that I should refuse; but you should have represented to Lady Deerswood that it was an external regulation which you ought to ask whether I considered so important as to wish you to discontinue being a grey sister if you laid aside. You ought to have tried whether you could not obey in this particular, instead of deciding for yourself, and it would have been more blessed had you done so.

"But it has not been this which I meant to warn you strongly against. My deep, strong anxiety for you has not been for the acts themselves, farther than as I saw them done in a way and in a spirit which has made me fear for you, because you have covered all

which was wrong in the way you have done them with a right appearance.

"And now all that I can say to you—and God grant that you may take these words simply, deeply, and truly as they are written—is this:

"Obey your mother *in* the Lord, but take heed that it be for Him and in His spirit. Take heed that it be in no spirit which shall separate you from the union with Jesus. Oh, my child, life is short. Satan and the world are busy, and they will do all they can to ensnare you. You mistrust me, and I can do now nothing more for you, for my words you will, perhaps, only pervert and misread. My child, may you be kept from evil. You have deeply wrung my heart, though it may be you cannot see why or wherefore.

"May God bless you! It may be long before you hear again from me. To His gracious care I commit you. "In Him,

"Your very affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M.S.

"I say it will be long, dearest child, not only because of the enclosed letter, but because, though you do not appear to realize it, I am too ill to be able to write argumentative letters, and because when my children write as if they no longer trusted me, I can but be silent, and commit them to God.

"I think if you knew the mental and bodily suffering your letter this evening has given me, you would try to write more gently and carefully, and more as my children are ever wont to write to me. I can but receive it, my child, as a punishment, through you, of my many sins, and pray that God's will be done in all that He may see fit to send."

Enclosed was a letter which Maude recognized as her mother's handwriting. She did not know that Lady Deerswood had written to Mother Angelica. The letter was as follows :—

"Dear Madam,

"I find that my daughter is in correspondence with yourself and some of the ladies of your establishment, and although I have not read the letters, yet I have heard enough to justify my writing to you to request that all letters, in future, may be addressed to *Miss Deerswood*, under cover to me.

"I remain, dear Madam,

"Yours obediently,

"H. DEERSWOOD."

Maude was touched at Mother Angelica's evidently suffering letter, though she was uninfluenced by its casuistry, and saw plainly the cause of its alteration in tone. At the same time she felt aggrieved and sorry at her mother's decided note. She wrote to Mrs. Rivers, who had now returned to Wilsden, and gave her the substance of the Superior's letter, expressing her regret that her mother should have written so severely, and without her knowledge, to Mother Angelica.

Mrs. Rivers was now most anxious that Maude should come to her. She pointed out all the evasion, the avoidance of the real subject in question, the prevarications and positive contradictions of the Westonbury Superior. She wrote :—

"You cannot, however much you are attached to her, help seeing this ; and appealing, as she does, to that attachment, does she forget that she teaches that all human affection is to be annihilated for the service of God ? and, if so, why is she to be exempt, or is she

to receive from you that affection which she teaches you to deny the exercise of to those nearest to you?

"I have little doubt that mamma's letter to her was wanting in moderation; but put yourself in her place, and see others striving to rob you of the confidence, affection, even of the society of your own child, and imagine only what you would be maddened into doing. You must consider this when you find things difficult to bear. Think of how much has been suffered on your account!"

Maude did, indeed, think of all the sorrows she had caused her own mother, as she began to realise the fact of all the selfishness and wilfulness that had first led her into seeking to devote herself to the life of a sister of mercy; she had left her mother when Lady Deerswood had most required her at home—she had left her widowed sister, who would gladly have had her companionship—she had been seeking high things (as she thought them) for herself, when, to reach them, she had to trample under her feet God's most clear and direct commands. Maude was beginning to distinguish between the counterfeit and the real—between the so-called "Religious Life" and the "Life in Christ;" and, humbling as was the conviction, yet she felt increasingly that it was a true one, that she had sought the "Religious Life," because she had no real knowledge of Christ or of the actual new life into which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, every believer in Christ is admitted; separation from evil, its cloisters; obedience to Christ, its Rule; seeking the good and well-being of others, its works, and prayer and praise, its delights! All this was but dawning upon Maude's mind at this time; but these

convictions grew clearer when once she became released from the fascination of the Westonbury yoke, to which she had so long willingly submitted.

She now wrote again to the Superior, firmly but most affectionately repeating what she had said before on the subject of Holy Obedience, earnestly entreated Mother Angelica to reconsider the Roman Catholic principles of Jesuitism, on which she had founded her community. If this was done she would continue to help forward the work in every possible way whilst at home, and would return when she could to Westonbury to work entirely among the poor; but that, if the Mother would not consent to this, then she must separate herself from the sisterhood, and consider herself freed from the Promise of Obedience, and, as much as she could, prevent others from joining Her community. Anxiously did she wait for an answer to this letter, which answer we now give, as also a note which was enclosed in it from Sister Ursula.

"My dearest Child,

"I have not studied Roman Catholic systems, and therefore cannot tell you whether I agree with them on the subject of Obedience or not. But *this* I know, that I must have cheerful, loving, confiding Obedience, and I must have it from the heart, or I will have none. It is playing with what is a sacred responsibility. My children seek me, they love me, they work with me, and I work for them and for the work at large. They promise to obey, and I expect them to be faithful. Whether this is a Roman Catholic system or not, I know not; it is the one God has taught me and mine.

"And now, my child, if you have it not—if you are changed—if you are faithless, I free you as far as I

can free you. I cannot break your promise. You bound yourself to me by a sacred tie, and that bond will stand at the Day of Judgment, let Satan and your own heart gloss it over now however successfully. THESE TIES SPIRITUAL, AND NOT NATURAL, ARE ETERNAL! You are deceiving yourself. It is not *your conscience* that rebels, it is a very different spirit. You have not been told to do anything against which your conscience ought or could rebel; but you have been reproved *for the spirit* in which you acted, and have been warned against loving home, relations, and the world more than Christ. Again, I repeat to you, as I shall have to answer for the words I have said to you at the Day of Judgment, those solemn words of Christ: 'He who putteth his hand to the plough and looking back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God. If any man love father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me.'

"And, step by step, you are or will return to the world, unless God has mercy. But think not that I will tyrannise over your soul, or seek that from you which you do not, with a humble and dutiful heart, wish to give.

"It is useless your asking me theoretical questions about Obedience, for it is beside my work in life to answer them. You know well that you have never been desired to do anything unlawful. You also know me well enough to know that your conscience was never tyrannised over. It is, therefore, a strangely unreal thing for you to continue to speak of *your conscience*! What have you been desired to do—what do you expect to be desired to do against your conscience! If you refer me to Roman Catholic theories,

I say again, I have nothing whatever to do with them, neither have you ; you know me and my work ; or rather, alas ! it seems as if you know neither me nor the work God has given me to do.

"It is of little avail, my child, my writing again. Do not expect it—I cannot trifle. If you have not understood me, or what I write, neither will you understand this or any future letters. The watchword of this Society is—Love and Obedience, and Obedience whole and trustful, and filial and entire. And now, Farewell !

"Be not faithless to Jesus, if you are faithless to me. Return the things—Psalter, Triangle, and Cross—which belong only to a faithful, true-hearted child of mine, and member of this Society.

"And may God keep you. In Him,

"I once more subscribe myself

"Yr very affectionate Mother,

"ANGELICA, Yr M. S."

"My very dear Sister,

"It is a long time since I heard from you. I do not like to ask Mother any questions concerning you ; but I am very anxious to know if you are at rest and happy again, and going on well. Do write to me, dearest, and tell me about yourself ; you know how much you are in my heart. I think of you, day after day, at the Blessed Communion, poor and unworthy as those prayers are. Now, I trust, dearest, you have been taking good courage, and fighting the good fight against Satan and your own heart. Does not this Advent time recall one into oneself if we will 'be still,' and look into our own hearts, with the thought of our Lord in awful judgment searching into every wish

and motive there? O that we might so use it, and pray Him to purge and burn out the self-love and self-will there; that we may be made meet to watch for His coming with joy and trust in Him! How I wish you could have been with us yesterday! Our darling little new novice was baptised in the afternoon (and dear Pauline also), and in the evening her parents gave her solemnly to the Life; dedicated her to God, in the Oratory, for the 'Religious Life,' should He give her the vocation in future years. Mr. Glimdale gave his little child into Mother's arms, to be trained up by her. The service was most beautiful, and it was such a joyful thought that such a dedication should have been so freely made of so precious, so holy a treasure, was it not? Her name, Mabel Ellen. She is to be called Mabel. It will be so sweet to have her here with us, to think that she will know nothing of the world and its deceitful, fleeting joys; but will be wholly our Lord's from, indeed even before, her birth: for one cannot but think that so many prayers, such an earnest offering will be accepted. I was in London for a day with Mother, and saw my own dear relations there. Mrs. Montgomerie has been received by Mother as a Grey Sister. She asked Mother so anxiously if married women could not be admitted into the Society, and others had also begged the same; *and as the Grey Order is an outward part of the Rule,* Mother received her, and she is now doing some work for the Society which Mother gave her in London.

"We are not a very numerous party here now; some are away. Child Elwin was received as such, and Child Mary, whom I think you know also: the former will be here all the winter. The Hospital is begun at

Portlyle; the old rooms are so charming! I hope we shall have them *all*, and *full* one day. The new soup-kitchen at Westonbury will be ready by Christmas, and, I expect, will have many guests, for the distress is most sad, now the cold weather is setting in. Do you remember Old Jack at No. 6? He is gone to his rest most peacefully, and rather suddenly. One misses his constant attendance; and so devout at church! Every empty place is *sad*. I do not like *yours* at all in the Oratory. I must end, dearest, for it is post time.

"With very much love,

"Your most truly affectionate,

"SISTER URSULA, S.H.C."

These letters failed in their object. Maude was too much in earnest to be either intimidated by threats, or won by compromise, into retaining principles which she had seen to be false; but it did come over her mind, as a momentary temptation, the thought of how easy it would be now to catch at the indicated change made in the Grey Order, and make her own terms with Mother Angelica! Mrs. Montgomerie, a married woman, certainly could not have made the promise of Obedience—could not have been received with the Admission Service, or be bound by the Rules. Why not give up all this painful differing with the Superior, and just take as much of the Rule as she liked, and leave all further discussion of the subject? How much that was disagreeable might now be prevented by compromise of principle—how expedient it would be to avoid all the annoyance and humiliation of acknowledging the sisterhood ideal a failure—of being looked upon as a deserter from the ranks, a "religious" who had forfeited her vocation—a faithless sister! But these thoughts

were banished as they rose in Maude's mind, and she resolved to follow resolutely, by God's grace, the course which seemed right to her, to write a farewell letter to the community, and to send back to Miss Melton the Psalter, Triangle, and Crosses.

In the meantime Lady Deerswood, who had gradually become acquainted with the real character of the Westonbury sisterhood, was very much surprised and pained at all the deceit which had been practised upon her, and to find that Maude had actually bound herself to a conventual life, and had promised implicit obedience to a Mother Superior. She re-read the letter she had received from Miss Melton, urging her not to remove her daughter from her safe keeping till she was strong enough to resist being led into the snares which the Roman Catholics were spreading everywhere; and it seemed difficult, with this letter in her hand, to believe the fact that its writer had herself riveted the conventual vow on Maude, and bound her in community by a Roman Catholic Rule of the most subtle nature!

Lady Deerswood was most anxious that Maude should see fully that the system at Westonbury was not only one utterly unrecognized by the Church of England, but contrary to all moral principle of integrity and honesty. This was also pointed out, and dwelt upon by the venerable old Archbishop, who was then Primate of the Church of England, and he urged upon Maude the duty of allowing Lady Deerswood to make what use might be deemed best of the Westonbury Rules, as they showed that a society, professing to belong to the Reformed Church, was secretly bringing in doctrines and practices utterly opposed to its Scriptural and Apostolic

teaching. He counselled her to search the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully, and pointed out to her that though Miss Melton advised the reading of the Holy Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelations, yet that she had said nothing of the Epistles, which were as the very keys fitted to unlock the treasures contained in these books. The Promise of Obedience he spoke of as both spiritually and morally wrong, dishonouring to parental authority, and as part of a subtle system of counterfeit Christianity, devised by the enemy of souls, whom, he added, "we must ever remember, can assume the garb of an angel of light."

Maude was not yet sufficiently enlightened to see how dark was the dim, religious light out of which she was emerging, and she often took alarm at her mother's uncompromising protest against everything connected with the sisterhood; she could not fully realise how great must be Lady Deerswood's antagonism towards a system that would separate her daughter from all home and family ties, claiming for a self-elected "Mother Superior" all the love, duty, and confidence which was due to herself,—to say nothing of the still more arrogant spiritual claims over her child's soul; but she did see, and with bitter regret and self-condemnation, how selfish and undutiful her own conduct towards her mother had been —how much sorrow she had given her—how much unhappiness she had caused! and she was glad to leave a system which had involved so much deceit.

The Westonbury correspondence had ceased; Lady Deerswood had possession of the Rules and Badges of the Society, and Maude, retaining only her

"Canonical Hours," had freed herself from the community. And now, having followed her rapidly through the various experiences into which her pursuit of a sister of mercy's life led her, we will only finally glance at the result to which she was led by God's grace, after her really earnest, but wilful and misdirected efforts.

She is again at Wilsden. More than two years have passed since she stood on that little bridge, forming an ideal in her mind of what a Protestant sister of mercy's life might be. How simple had been her idea then of a life passed in seclusion from the world, and of devotedness to the poor and suffering! With what delight had she read that first letter she received, signed by a sister of mercy, telling her of a loving welcome ready for her if she could come and make trial of the life for three months,—it would enable her to judge of its duties and privileges, and make a final decision about it—nothing required but a conformity to outward rules, and a strict obedience to all directions concerning her work, and this of course being necessary for the sake of order and regularity; and then the description in the next letter of the work itself: about six hours to be spent in it daily, and each given that to do for which she was best suited,—teaching in the schools, visiting the poor, taking charge of orphans, time for rest and recreation in the middle of the day, time for private devotion in the morning and afternoon, besides the formal services, an hour for spiritual reading in the evening, and Holy Communion every day. All this seemed so simple. Maude remembered how she longed to be able to join that "happy little company" of five sisters, with their Mother, Miss Melton, and how sorry she

was when her own mother would not hear of it. Then with a swift retrospect she saw how her simple idea of a sisterhood was moulded by Mother Angelica's letters into a "religious life" ideal, how fascinated she became with the ascetic doctrines, and how nearly they had led her into the Romish Communion! Then her Westonbury life: her complete satisfaction in finding there all that had seemed to her as only belonging to Roman Catholic doctrine and practice—her absorbing interest in her work—her utter forgetfulness of home claims—her will-worship, in submitting herself so entirely to an authority and yoke which God had not imposed on her—the deceit involved in the concealment of the real principles on which the community was founded,—all this was now patent to Maude's mind.

But again, she traced the earnest and thorough delusion which at the time had hidden this deceitfulness from her, the convictions she had had of the sacredness and reality of the "religious life"—the romance that had thrown a halo over so much that was useless and unnecessary in daily toil,—the want of common sense which had led her to submit so implicitly to be sent about and left alone in circumstances of such trial to bodily health and nerve,—as Maude reviewed all this she thanked God, who in His gracious Providence overruled all events, and had enabled her to seek for and find Him in the midst of her many delusions. But now she felt so ignorant, so distrustful, of herself. Where was she to turn for help and guidance? She was Anglican in all her religious tastes, and had a positive dislike to what was called "Low Churchism."

On her arrival at Wilsden, her mother had begged her to see Mr. Leadon, a clergyman in the neighbour hood, and one morning she had a long walk and conversation with him. He inveighed against Miss Melton and her system as thoroughly Romanistic; but, at the same time, he held, so at least it struck Maude, all the Romanistic views.

"You do not preach this, Mr. Leadon," she said, in reference to what he was saying of the Blessed Eucharist.

"Oh, no!" he replied; "if I did, I should empty the church—the people must be brought up to these truths by degrees."

Maude was silent, but not satisfied. In the silence of her own room she thought long and prayerfully on the subject of the Sacramental System. To be brief, we must give in a condensed form the substance of these reflections, which was as follows:—

"Mr. Leadon tells me that Mother Angelica's system is wrong, and yet that system seems to me to be the logical result and the practical carrying out of his own views. He considers life in Christ to be begun in the soul and carried on through the instrumentality of the Sacraments. He insists on implicit obedience, not, indeed, to Mother Angelica, but to Mother Church. Surely, if he is right, Westonbury principles in the main are right, and, if they are true, then Roman Catholic doctrine has the advantage of being equally true and less deceitful. Was it true that grace came through the Sacraments? Did that new life, without which it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, begin by Baptism? Was it kept pure and strengthened by the Sacraments of

Confession and the Eucharist? Had the priest power to absolve a soul from sin? At the Communion, did the bread and wine turn veritably into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and feed the Baptismal Life? and, consequently, was the daily communion, and constant confession to a priest, and penance and fasting, and asceticism, the great means ordained by God for spiritual growth? If so, surely the 'religious life' vocation must be a true and most blessed one!"

And in Maude's mind rose the loved ideal again — of the contemplative life, separated from the world within convent walls, — fasting, and prayer —hours all spent in the church or oratory—constant adoration!—growth in spiritual graces till the body was almost ignored, and the soul, kept free from all worldly thought, or affection, or desire, would rise into a state of extatic beatitude! It was with deep conviction that she said to herself, "If the sacramental system is truth, the 'religious life' is the highest manifestation of Christian Perfection." And now a great temptation came to her. Why not end these perplexities? How could she judge as to the truth, when Christendom had been so divided in doctrine? and yet Holy Scriptures claimed as the foundation of every conflicting opinion. Why not lead the "religious life" in its integrity, protected by the authority of the church from such abuses as must creep in when a self-constituted Mother Superior assumes absolute rule over the souls and bodies of the sisters? After all, the Anglicans were playing with edged tools, and no wonder if, by their unpractised handling, deadly wounds were inflicted. Dr. Oldacre himself had admitted,

"That it was heresy more or less in us which keeps Rome from acknowledging us."

The temptation was great, but Maude dared not ignore the doubt that was in her mind as to the truth of the whole of this wonderful Sacramental System. Holy Scripture, as it rose in her memory, seemed to teach so simply, a sign meant a sign, and not the thing signified. Christ called Himself the Door, the Vine, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd; and was it not through Him she entered into life? Was He not the sustainer of life?—was He not the seeker of the lost and wandering ones? He spoke of bread and wine as symbolic of His broken Body and shed Blood. He told those who loved Him to eat and drink these symbols, bringing to mind through them their Lord's death, till He came again; and was it not a marvellous refreshment and a strengthening to the believing soul in this act of faith to realise that, through the shed blood, through the broken body, death for them had no more sting—the grave had no more victory—in His death they died—in His resurrection life they live?

Could there be the old heathen lie of a sensuous worship and idolatry hidden under the normally Christian ceremonial and pageantry of the adoration of the Host?

Was the doctrine of the altars, the clouds of incense, the varied garments of the priests, borrowed from the old sacred Jewish types, which had passed entirely away, when the real Lamb of God came and fulfilled them all?

Could she doubt that all this symbolic worship was empty and vain? The Veil of the Temple was rent!

Christians could now come boldly to the Throne of Grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help them in every time of need.

Could she trust her own naturally sinful and idolatrous heart? Could she trust implicitly to any human teaching?—there must be an infallible standard by which to test its truth.

Surely that test must be the Word of God contained in the inspired Scriptures. Granting that she was not able to study them in the original, and that there was the danger of Holy Scripture being wrested by ignorant and carnal minds to their own destruction, yet, which was best, to take their translation on the authority of so many eminent and critical scholars, and to trust to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in searching them for oneself, or to receive them through the teaching of Holy Mother Church, overlaid with tradition, and interpolated with the doctrines of development?

Maude thought of the Old Testament Scriptures in Hebrew, which had been given by Dr. Oldacre, and placed on the altar of the Westonbury Oratory, and of the fact that the study of the Word of God was, in reality, made quite secondary to the teaching of the Church in "religion." Which was safest? Should she trust the Voice of the Church, and follow blindly, crushing down all these convictions and doubts that were arising in her mind—stilling for ever these regrets for the sorrow she had caused her mother, and this newly-awakened consciousness of the undutifulness, selfishness, and deceit with which she had acted in her reckless pursuit of the "religious life?" Should she throw reason, judgment, and responsibility aside, and

follow, with all the will and devotion of her soul, her "vocation" for the conventual life—not, indeed, at Westonbury, but wherever she might find it carried out in integrity and without deceit? Would this be pleasing to God?

Maude saw, as yet, but in faint lines of light, the vital truths which clustered round the one central faith of her soul—her belief in the Saviour. She had been given power, in the midst of her delusions at Portlyle, to understand and cling to the fact of the Atonement. The Lord Jesus Christ had died for her, and she knew that she was saved, and belonged to Him. Weak and undeveloped still as this faith was, yet it enabled her to come to God in a full assurance of His love and guidance.

That morning at Wilsden, after her conversation with Mr. Leadon, and her long, lonely meditations on the Sacramental System, Maude on her knees before God, with His Word in her hands, resolved henceforth to trust to the Voice of God alone; she prayed that the Holy Spirit would teach her to understand the truths taught in the Scriptures—that she might be kept from believing anything that was false or delusive in man's teaching—that she might know more of the Saviour as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—that she might ever see in Him the Absolver of all her sins, in His Words her Rules, in the Holy Spirit her infallible guide—and that she might be enabled to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith she was called in Him.

The ideal of the conventual life was giving place to the realization of the true life in Christ—and Maude, looking as it were on the shipwreck of all her

treasured idealities—felt joyfully that her feet were on the rock, and was content to part with all that was false, however fascinating to her natural mind, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

Thus ends Maude's own personal Narrative.

Many years have passed since that solemn hour of solitary prayer and self-consecration to follow Christ alone; and my close friendship with her enables me to conclude her history with my personal testimony that she has been enabled in the strength of the Lord, and by the guidance and help of His sustaining grace, to live and act in the spirit of the resolution then and there made. She has been enabled to show that a life of more real and entire consecration to God may be led in the midst of the domestic ties and social duties He has given us, than could be carried out in any convent. She has learned that true Holy Obedience, which consists, not in implicit submission to a human leader, but in a reverent, humble, and trustful reliance on Christ alone as our Guide, our Shepherd, the Captain of our salvation; and she has found that the true secret of that peace and rest which she first vainly yearned for when she stood on the little bridge at Wilsden, is to be found in listening to the Voice which He has promised shall guide "His own sheep"—the Voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left."

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

FINIS.

IT may not be wholly out of place to add a few extracts from a letter I have received since the above was published, from Maude herself, which will show, better than words of mine could, the spirit in which she carries on her life-work.

It hardly needs to be told that when she returned to her mother and her home circle, she did not return to the aimless and frivolous life of other days. Under many difficulties, she was enabled by God's grace, to keep her own steady and consistent course of life, firm in all that regarded principle, while ready to yield in matters only concerning personal comfort and pleasure, and seeking to "redeem the time," and do heartily what her hand found to do. And now, after the lapse of many years as a happy wife and mother, and the centre of a christian household, she is still not less active among the sick, the ignorant, and the needy, than she was when, as "Sister Maude," she threaded the dark alleys and lanes of Postlyle.

But her own words will best explain her views.

"I quite see with you that it would be well, in this second edition, to press on your readers' attention the difference between the false and the true, bringing in direct contrast with the 'religious life' of monasticism the true Life in Christ of which it is the counterfeit."

* * * * * * * *

. . . "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The framers of monastic systems ought to have studied the context more closely, for the Lord goes on to say, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

. . . How I wish you could bring out in strong contrast to the "Sister," in her neglected, conspicuous dress, going about with an ever present consciousness of *self*—the religious self manifested in the varied forms of asceticism, false humility, will worship, disobedience to parents, and self-inflicted sufferings—the picture of such a true "Sister" in Christ as many you and I have known—one whose womanly refinement is shown in her neat and "modest apparel" walking out from the broad road of the world's fashions and follies, because she believes in Him who has said "Narrow is the way which leadeth to life eternal";—going in and out amid all the sacred relationships of life, as one who knows that she is not her own: but is bought with a price, and joined to Him "in an everlasting covenant," and stands in the perfect liberty wherewith Christ hath made her free. Such sisters, thanks be to God, *are* going in and out among us, not shut up in cells of brick or stone, or walking by the rule of man, but led by the word of God through the teaching of the Holy Spirit: seeking, not the absolution of a father confessor, but confessing continually every failure and every shortcoming to their one great High Priest.

"If only the souls who are honestly seeking for nearness to God by convents and sisterhoods, could be brought to see the Divine door which stands ever open, inviting them to enter in and find their true life

in Him,—how all the counterfeits would fade from their minds in the light of the glorious reality."

"And one who does really long for holiness, however ignorantly, may rest assured that God the Holy Spirit will lead her into the way of all truth, if only she will search the Scriptures, which, as Christ Himself said, "testify of Him," and thus realize the truth of His own words, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

* * * * * * * *

I can scarcely conclude better than by quoting the lines of one whose hymns have borne blessed testimony to these truths, and who now "being dead, yet speaketh."

I need no other plea
With which to approach to God,
Than His own mercy, boundless, free,
Through Christ on man bestowed;
A Father's love, a Father's care
Receives and answers every prayer.

I need no human ear
In which to pour my prayer,
My great High Priest is ever near,
On Him I cast my care;
To Him, Him only, I confess,
Who can alone absolve and bless

I need no works by me,
Wrought with laborious care,
To form a meritorious plea,
Why I Heaven's bliss should share;
Christ's finished work through boundless grace
Has there secured my dwelling place.

I need no prayers to saints,
Beads, relics, martyrs' shrines,
Hardships neath which the spirit faints,
Yet still sore burdened pines;
Christ's service yields my soul delight,
Easy His yoke, His burden light.

I need no other book
To guide my steps to Heaven,
Than that on which I daily look,
By God's own Spirit given;
And this when He illumes our eyes,
"Unto Salvation makes us wise."

I need no Holy oil
To anoint my lips in death,
No priestly power, my guilt to assoil,
And aid my parting breath;
Long since those words bade fear to cease,
"Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace."

I need no priestly mass,
No purgatorial fires,
My soul to anneal, my guilt to efface
When this brief life expires;
Christ died my eternal life to win,
His blood has cleansed me from all sin.

I need no other dress,
I urge no other claim,
Than His unspotted righteousness,
In Him complete I am;
Heaven's portals at that word fly wide,
No passport do I need beside.

*March*, 1872.

# APPENDIX.

# APPENDIX.

THERE are few subjects more curious to the student of human nature, and more painfully interesting to the Christian observer, than the history of the rise and progress of Conventual life in the earlier stages of the Christian Church, and its revival in our own days.

This is hardly the place to enter fully on so large a subject, and the discussion of all its bearings would require an abler pen. But without attempting historical details which can be found elsewhere, it may be worth while to touch upon a few of the tendencies which have made that life so fascinating to many earnest minds.

We cannot doubt that, in the first instance, many true Christians were led to adopt this kind of life from their just horror of the wickedness of the heathen world around them, and perhaps even from their dread of the increasing spirit of worldliness in the Church. They saw the evil, and did not see that their work should have been to fight, not to fly.

They were "the salt of the earth," and the salt was meant to mingle with the masses and preserve them from corruption, not to be withdrawn and set apart.

Mixed with this natural though mistaken feeling, was another which has been prevalent among Christians in all ages—the impression that the earth and its belongings are *in themselves* evil and corrupt. Christians do not always distinguish between the old evil nature, which has been condemned, and is to be *mortified*, (literally, killed and utterly put down)—and those natural affections, faculties, and feelings, which, like the external world and all connected with it, are created by God, and capable of being

turned to good or evil according to the use we make of them.

Many besides the old Manicheans forget, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof—", and treat it if it were altogether and fundamentally evil.

This naturally led to men's forsaking human ties, and endeavouring as much as possible to isolate themselves from everything which belonged to the outer world. Such a life came to be designated as emphatically "the *religious* life," as if no other life could be truly religious.

Another circumstance led to foster this impression. There are individuals—though commoner, probably, in the Oriental type of character than among ourselves—to whom a *life* of contemplative devotion is peculiarly congenial. Their constitution, physical and mental, enables them to pass many hours together, not only in devotional exercises, but completely abstracted from the outer world.

To such persons, the life of a hermit or cloistered nun might easily be made to present real attractions; and while rapt in the contemplations so dear to them, they were easily led to forget that even the Apostles were not allowed to be always on the Mount with Christ, but were commanded to descend again with Him to labour among their fellow men.

Such persons forget that for them, such a life might become one of concentrated selfishness, not the less real because accompanied by ascetic self-denial.

But the evil did not end here. Others were led to follow their example, to whom the contemplative life was really not possible. The majority, even of earnest Christians, while feeling, as all such must, the necessity of appointed times of retirement and prayer—of "communing with the heart in the chamber, and being still," are incapable of *long-continued* exercises of this kind. They have often to strive and pray against wandering thoughts in private and public prayer, and the attempt to spend a life in contempla-

tion ends in a miserable failure. They sink either into dreamy inane vacuity, or into a state of perpetual self-absorption and self-occupation, which must lower instead of exalting the mind.

All who have ventured to give their personal experience of convent life bear witness to this fact: and in Roman Catholic countries, to judge by the casual expressions of the people, it does not appear that a cloistered nun or monk usually stands very high in their estimation.

But many circumstances have combined to produce in our own age and country a revival of that admiration of and desire for, conventual life, which had at one time completely died away.

The High Church or Ritualistic movement began at a time when a strong desire was felt for something, as one of its writers expressed himself, "deeper and truer" than had contented men's minds before.

The great Evangelical Revival of the previous century had done a work which could not fade away: but its leaders had gone to their rest, and the spirit with which it had commenced had, in too many cases, began to wax cold. The great truths, which, when taught from the fulness of a heart deeply moved by God's Spirit, carried all before them, fell dead and lifeless on the ear when preached, as they often were, in a mechanical and traditional manner by those who had received them only through the intellect.

No preaching can be so cold and dead as Evangelical preaching when the life is gone out of it. There were many and noble exceptions: yet those who look back, must remember that the state we have described was but too common.

Then, "while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares." The old Laudite party revived with new power. Its teaching appealed to many principles which act powerfully on the human mind, and some of which have an

influence for good as well as for evil. The love of order and regularity—the reverence for established authority, the love of the beautiful and graceful in art as well as poetry—all were pressed into the service. Those who had some anxiety to satisfy their consciences with a certain amount of "religiousness," without giving up the world, could combine frivolous amusements with daily services; and young people with æsthetic tastes, could pursue their painting and embroidery in the service of the Church, and fancy they were doing a work of piety.

For the gay and thoughtless many, there were attractive services, solemn music, and scenic decorations: for the earnest and anxious-minded few, a life of self-abnegation and devotedness was offered, which answered to their vague aspirations, in the shape of sisterhoods and conventual establishments.

The present state of society offers a combination peculiarly favourable to the formation of such institutions. On the one hand, we all see before us, in consequence of the increase of population, a growing mass of misery, ignorance, and degradation, among the poor of our great cities, which all the many existing agencies for good can hardly meet. There is a vast field of work to be done, and a grievous deficiency of labourers to do it. On the other hand, our state of society presents a large number of women of a class not compelled to work for bread, and who being, comparatively, isolated from the closest ties and most pressing duties, have a much larger portion of leisure at command than they know how to employ. Some of these have the right Christian decision and energy, to see the work that lies before them, and to take an independent stand, content to be available wherever God places them; but many there are who wish to be useful, and know not how to set about it. They dread the responsibility of acting for themselves, and long to escape it, *as they think they can*,

by giving themselves up to the guidance of others. To such, these sisterhoods have a powerful attraction. Their romance, their vague "besoin de se dévouer," is gratified. Duties many of them might have found, in their own circles and homes had they sought for them; but it was too much trouble to look prayerfully and humbly for God's guidance, and then to do quietly what their hand found to do—it was easier to break through all home ties, and then persuade themselves and others that the choice lay between a life of inaction and luxurious ease at home, and the unselfish devotedness of a Sister of Mercy. And how easily disappointed feeling, ennui, vain craving for excitement, and a thousand other tendencies of our fallen nature, may assume the mask of devotedness to God's service, all who know something of their own sinful hearts can bear witness. While, on the other hand, many who sincerely desire to lead a life of holiness, who long for peace with God and do not understand that it is to be found only in Him "who is our peace"—who desire to put away their sins, and think it can be done by the sacrifice of *themselves*, instead of turning in faith to the only one perfect and all sufficient sacrifice—many of such erring and misguided ones, are found to swell the ranks of those who are pressing into the sisterhoods, and vainly hoping that the serge dress and black veil will shield them from all the dangers and temptations of the world!

But there are not wanting arguments, and plausible ones too, which are brought forward by many, not themselves advocates of Romanizing views.

It is alleged that these sisterhoods fill up a blank which needs to be supplied, and a work which but for them must remain undone. The most devoted solitary labourer, these advocates observe, cannot accomplish what can be done by combined energies.

The ordinary claims of social and family life and house-

hold cares, however right and proper and needful in themselves, *must* be hindrances to the efficiency and quantity of the work done.

Again, there are classes of work, and those most important and needful, which seem from their nature to require that the persons employed should not be residents in a family. Nursing, of which the want has been so strongly felt and recognized of late, is an occupation which obviously requires isolation of this kind.

Again, there are many anxious and ready and able to work in the neglected parts of our great cities, whose means would not allow them to take up their residence alone, near their work, even if they could dispense with all need of protection and companionship, which for a woman is often hardly practicable. "Would you," it is said, "leave all these important fields of usefulness neglected,—as they too often are,—simply because the agency employed appears to Protestant minds to savour of Romanism?"

We must allow these objections their full weight. Much of what is thus alleged is true in itself. But it should be remembered, first, that in deprecating everything approaching to the monastic principle, we are not condemning resident associations for charitable purposes.

The Deaconesses' Institutions on the Continent are known to work well: and though greater liberty of action, and less stringency of rule, would probably be desired by English women, still the recent formation of many Mission Houses, where Christian ladies can reside for a time or permanently within reach of their work,—of Nursing Institutions, and other establishments of the kind, show that the advantage of combined effort *can* be obtained without the evils we deprecate.

Another point it is important to keep in mind. That these sisterhoods do accomplish charitable work, we do not ıy: but first we would ask, what have they accomplished

which could not, and has not been done by those restrained by no convent rules or discipline? and secondly, are loving works of charity *the main object with which these sisterhoods have been formed?*

We emphatically declare, No.

That many have joined them with this belief, is certain; that charity *appears* to the casual observer to be the main object is true: but all who have looked deeply into the subject, and who venture to declare their convictions, will unite in bearing testimony to the fact, that the main object of these institutions is to cultivate what Romish and Anglican writers call the RELIGIOUS LIFE—that is, a life of celibacy and ascetic self-abnegation passed in a round of ceremonial religious observances and so-called saintly meditations.

In the Middle Ages, this "religious life" was the avowed object of the conventual system, and charitable and educational work came in incidentally: in the present age of outward activity and restless movement, this would be impossible; but the contemplative nun, bowed in perpetual adoration, stands concealed behind the more generally attractive form of the benevolent and devoted Sister of Charity, soothing the sick and caring for the orphan.

And this principle of the "religious life" contains as it were the germ of the whole Romish system—the double standard of conduct, one for the world and the other for the saint,—the undue reliance on human authority,—the outward, sensuous religion, walking by sight and sense instead of faith.

It was in the deep conviction that the dangers from the progress of this corrupt religion are no imaginary ones—that the evil is near us, even at our doors—and that all who, through God's Grace, are enabled to hold fast those great doctrines of vital Christianity for which our Reformers laboured and suffered, are bound to warn others against the

rapidly spreading delusions of the Romish and semi-Romish systems—that I persuaded my friend to allow me to lay before the public the results of her close and intimate experience of monasticism during her correspondence with and residence among the Sisters of Mercy.

It was in no spirit of harsh censure of *individuals* that this work has been given to the world: we desire to war with systems, not with persons. We believe that the English Sisterhoods in principle are simply an introduction to the sensuous and corrupt system of the Church of Rome; and as such we must entreat all those who are still alive to the danger, to be warned in time!

E. J. WHATELY.

*September*, 1869.

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| Hear My Prayer ... ... ... ... | *Batten* |
| Lord We Beseech Thee ... ... | *Batten* |
| Lord, who shall Dwell ... ... | *Rogers* |
| O give Thanks ... ... ... ... | *Rogers* |
| O Pray for the Peace... ... ... | *Rogers* |
| Out of the Deep ... ... ... ... | *Aldrich* |
| Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem ... | *Scott* |
| Sing we Merrily ... ... ... ... | *Batten* |
| Teach Me, O Lord ... ... ... | *Rogers* |

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